

12614-84
F A N N Y:

A
N O V E L;

IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS.

WRITTEN BY A LADY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR W. RICHARDSON, UNDER THE
ROYAL EXCHANGE.

M,DCC,LXXXV.



FANNY:

A NOVEL.

LETTER I.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

THE devil take intrigues, Frank, say I! no doubt you will be surprized to hear such an exclamation from me, knowing my temper so well; but I am so damnably plagued with the amour in which I am at present engaged, that I am more than half ready to fore swear all connexion with the sex in future. No poor married devil was ever worse tormented than I am—one advantage only remains to save my neck, which is, that I can

B

with

with greater ease get rid of my tormentor.

Some friend has put it into the little gypsy's head that I am in duty bound to marry her; which is a flight far above any idea of her own, even when she had more in her power; indeed, her ideas were never very lively, which convinces me, that she does not owe this absurd chimera to the fertility of her own brain; had she insisted on such a promise as an article of capitulation, I should have born the din of her loquacious tongue with more composure:—but as it is, after meeting me half way, and by a premature surrender robbing me of the glory and pleasure of a victory, she is much mistaken if she thinks storming will have any other effect than hastening my desertion of her; which must at any rate have happened within the course of a few months, as all her charms consist in a fair face; and though a face may make captives, much more is required to retain them.

Faith if the women knew how much opposition excites our pursuit, I think

we

we should now and then see them put a force upon nature, and resist the dear deluders, in order to fix their admiration: but that is impossible!

“ Women born to be controul’d,

“ Stoop to the forward and the bold.”

I am glad to hear that the flight of my dulcinea, has at length opened the eyes of her father and mother, and that they can now see the amiable qualities of their eldest daughter in their true light; she, poor girl, led a miserable life, owing to her parents unnatural partiality for her sister, till kind chance threw her into the way of a young gentleman of genteel fortune, who had sense enough to distinguish her merit, and generosity enough to reward it. The old don, glad of a pretence to give all his money to his darling Lucy, objected to the match, though it was certainly far above his most sanguine expectations; but, by additional cruelties, obliged her to complete the happiness of her lover, by giving him her hand without his consent, or any portion, except good sense, and an excellent disposition improv-

ed in the school of adversity. The old man has, since I have deprived him of his Lucy, given her the four thousand pounds which he very piously intended for the little harpy, but which in justice should have been divided. So you see, good cometh out of evil, and I have only been an humble instrument, in the hands of madam fortune, who for the sake of a frolick, chose to bestow her favours vice versa. I now think, considering that I have only exposed vice, without injuring one particle of virtue, that a brace of thousands bestowed upon the damsel in lieu of the portion she has lost, will be a reparation sufficient to clear away every sting from a conscience, even *delicate* as mine! Her family will be enriched, both in fortune and happiness, by her absence. Her ancestors pride had not decreased with their wealth, and in order to support the shadow, though the substance was gone, left a paltry estate of 700l. per ann. entailed upon the male line, and their descendant Charles Godfrey, not more addicted to parsimony than his predecessors, would not have had one sixpence to bestow upon his girls, had not
a legacy

a legacy opportunely devolved to him. When I have received the necessary sum, and matters are so settled according to my plan, I shall, without the least remorse, take a French leave of my fair one, and sally forth in search of new adventures.

Now Frank, if I find that your next contains one of your old sermons against the crime of seduction, I shall most certainly commit it to the flames, and fore-swear your correspondence. By my soul I shall bear no reproaches now ! Whatever faults may rise up against me, my conscience entirely acquits me in this affair, which, by the bye, can be troublesome enough upon some occasions. But where is my present offence ?—What crime have I committed ?—Have I seduced innocence, or led virtue astray ?—No, by Heavens !—'Tis I who have been entrapped, or if I have laid snares, 'tis I who have been caught in them ; I have endured the punishment of daily persecutions, for the mere crime of carrying off a silly girl, who would otherwise have fallen to the lot of the first ensign she had met with, who, not

B 3

being

being able to provide for her, must have left her upon the town. Preach away!—I defy thee!—I am proverb proof!—A retrospection of events authorizes me to subscribe myself your honest friend,

DAVENANT.

To-morrow I commence my ramble. I have spent three years in viewing other countries: I shall now dedicate as many months in exploring the beauties of my native soil—I shall first perform a promise to Oswald Sutton, spend a fortnight at the Abbey, then regale myself with E—— races. The joys of an English horse race will be perfectly nouvelle; thank my stars, amongst my numerous perfections, I cannot reckon that of being a black leg. If the women are handsome, to the delights of the field I am perfectly indifferent.

LETTER

LETTER II.

MISS FANNY CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

PARDON me, my dear Lady Louisa, for making you a partaker in my sorrows, and attempting to write to you, when I was too much overwhelmed with grief, even to utter my complaints with coherency: but I know not why I make an apology. I know your sympathizing heart, I have every reason to be assured of your friendship, and I have your kind permission to make you a sharer in every thing that affects me. I am convinced then, that I am very culpable in supposing, even for a moment, an excuse necessary, and for that alone I ask forgiveness.

Thank God, time has brought me to a more composed state of mind; indeed, when I became capable of reflection, I found myself very faulty, in giving way to such immoderate grief, which was little less than murmuring at the dispensations of Providence. To lose the best of fathers, to

be left an orphan at so early an age, without a friend to look up to for protection, a more than common woes, and sufficient to subdue a mind more steady than mine: but Heaven granted me fortitude, and reason resuming her seat, I found great consolation in the remembrance of my dear father's virtues, and of the uneasy life from which he was released, having never enjoyed health for the last ten years, and being continually subject to the cruel insults of his great relations, who you have heard me say, never forgave him after his marriage with my mother. One of my uncles, who was about a year older than my father, was very fond of him, and quarrelled with the Earl of Carlton on his account. This amiable man went abroad when I was six years old, and after having written three letters, which gave his friends the pain of knowing him to be unfortunate, he ceased writing, and was never heard of after, though neither expence or trouble were spared in inquiries concerning him.

This loss, with the death of my mother, which happened in the same year, my father

ther never recovered, though to all appearance he was perfectly resigned, and I believe, the smallest complaint never escaped from him; but the visible effect it had upon his constitution, was a convincing proof how severely he felt; his only remaining comforts were, attending with the utmost diligence to my education, and the morals of his parishioners, to whom his benevolent heart displayed itself in the most extensive acts of charity.

When I was fourteen, he was persuaded to send me to a London boarding-school to finish my education. Our parting caused him a severe struggle, but he said, he would not deprive me of the most trifling accomplishment, even to prolong his own life. "No, my child," said he, "I shall have the satisfaction of thinking, by the education I have given you, added to your own natural worth, that you will be an honour, rather than a disgrace to your relations; this will be my comfort in your absence, and all my wish for life will centre in seeing my expectations realized."

Delighted as I was with the novelty of

the scene I was going to engage in, yet my heart recoiled at leaving the place of my nativity. My father's words sunk deep into my mind, and the joyful thought of returning in two short years, possessed of every accomplishment his fond heart could wish, soon chased away sorrow, which had for the first time obtruded itself on my mind. Little did I think, of the real horrors that surrounded me. A parting! An eternal parting! with my father! My only parent! My only friend!—Forgive these tears, they will flow

* * * * *

I believe in my last letter, which was dictated by a mind little short of frenzy, I did not mention finding an aunt here, to whose person I was an entire stranger, but whose character and situation in life I had often heard from my dear father. She was sister to my mother, who had excellencies sufficient to obliterate any remembrance of the obscurity of her birth; but to those excellencies her sister could claim no kindred, except in the negative virtue, of not having a bad heart: she is most extremely vulgar, has a turn for gossiping,

sipping, and will listen with avidity to her own faults, recounted of any other person. I feel myself wrong in exposing the foibles of my poor aunt; but I have been so accustomed to make you a partaker of every thought, that I should esteem it a violation of friendship if I made the slightest concealment.

After what I have said, I can easily judge of your astonishment, when I add, that I have chosen this aunt for my guardian: hear my reasons, and your wonder will cease. Consider that I am an orphan, entirely friendless, an absolute stranger to the world, with a fortune of six thousand pounds at my own disposal, but which I cannot dispose of myself, without censure, or without danger.—A stranger, as I have said before, to the world, and almost every body in it: I know, to be sure, who were my father's most intimate friends; but I know likewise, that he had some private reasons for not making choice of them, or he would not have deferred an election so essential to the future welfare of his child. The knowledge of his distrust, joined to my own opinion, that it was my conduct more

than my little fortune, which wanted a guardian, and that it was a trust most proper for one of my own sex, determined me in favour of the step I have taken. You will naturally say, Mrs. Forbes, (my aunt) of all females, is the most improper to regulate a woman's conduct,—granted! but she is the only female, who, I have any reason to think, would trouble herself with my concerns. There is also another consideration, which is, that by living with me, she will avoid the expence of house-keeping, to which her trifling income is very inadequate. I am perfectly sensible, that I shall not find in her the guide and monitor necessary to lead me through the rugged path of life; but she will be a witness of my actions, which will blunt the envenomed edge of slander,—she will be a sanction to the world, whilst from my dear father's kind care, and let me add your bright example, I hope I shall never want the sanction of an approving conscience. No, your volatile friend, though prone to error, will, I trust, live unconnected with vice.

It is now above five months since my
irreparable

irreparable loss, during which my aunt and self have lived together in a neat small house, and I make no doubt (if I can recover my spirits) of our tasting the sweets of a comfortable mediocrity.

I have been visited by most of the families in the town and its environs; there are some I am very much pleased with, others whom once I should have laughed at; nay perhaps, at some future period, I may offend you with their portraits; I know your violent aversion to satire, and you know my opinion is, that it drops its pernicious quality, when only levelled at wilful errors, and that it often stimulates people to behave well, who would regard no other motive; but as this is not the first time we have discussed this point, it shall not lengthen a letter already too long.

Pray give my most respectful compliments to the Countess, with thanks for the great condescension and kindness with which she has ever honoured

Your sincere friend,

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER

LETTER III.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

NOTWITHSTANDING your prohibition, my Lord, I shall certainly speak my sentiments; and if that freedom is not to be purchased at an easier rate than the forfeiture of your correspondence, it must be even so.

You applaud yourself highly upon the noble transaction in which you have been engaged, and very modestly arrogate to yourself every good consequence which follows.

It is seldom that a *retrospection of events* can afford satisfaction to the mind of a libertine. Heaven forbid, my Lord, that your principles should ever be so totally subverted, as to be invulnerable to the stings of remorse: believe me, the moment will present itself, when a review of your past actions, will not be accompanied with that self-complacency, in which you now exult. “ You have not seduced
innocence,

innocence, or led virtue astray,"—No! by meeting with vice in a female form, almost coeval with your own, your purpose has been defeated, and by your own confession, you have been disappointed of the *pleasure*, the *glory* of a *victory*.—Is that man less a villain, who meditates the murder of his neighbour, because the hand of death in the mean time strikes the blow, and saves him from the perpetration of the deed?—In what is the libertine less culpable than the assassin? The latter is the destroyer of life, and the former of that content and rectitude of mind, which can alone render it a blessing!—The last does not inflict so deep a wound on the parental breast as the first. Is it not happiness to resign a much loved child to the silent tomb, rather than to behold her the prey of villainy, the companion of vice, scorned by the world, and smote by the accusations of a guilty conscience?—Pause, my Lord, a while, before you launch forward in pursuits pregnant with the bitterest anguish, and the keenest reproaches.

You will, perhaps, think I have given
my

my sentiments too freely; I do'nt wish to offend you, but must repeat, they are sentiments to which I shall ever adhere, and shall with pride avow: your real ones, my Lord, are similar, though obscured by a mistaken education; had I, like you, met with every indulgence, and been left to the sole direction of my passions, I fear I should not have been worthy the honour of subscribing myself

Your sincere friend,

FRANCIS FITZHENRY.

I entertained hopes of meeting you at E——, but you know I am not a free agent. I am not sufficiently master of my own actions, always to follow where my wishes lead.

LETTER IV.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

A Thousand thanks are due to my sweet Fanny for her very kind letter, and the narrative it contained, though sincerely
ly

ly do I wish it had been suppressed, as it renewed those tears which had before flowed too plentifully.

I am glad you begin to find your plan comfortable, yet I cannot help hoping it may in time give place to one more eligible, sure such a flower could not be born to "blush unseen," do not nourish your grief by solitude. Report says you cannot be better situated for the enjoyment of society than in E——: court its influence, I entreat you. From your great spirits, I apprehended grief would be violent in its effects, but I am sincerely concerned to find it so lasting. Heaven grant my dear friend her wonted cheerfulness! My mother fervently joins in this prayer; nobody has more right to recommend resignation, a virtue, so strongly exemplified in her own conduct: this dear parent, who loves you on my account, as well as your own, wrote to Lady Wilson, a friend of hers, who lives about two miles from E——; she mentioned you in the warmest terms of affection, and added, that any mark of civility or attention conferred upon Miss Clifton,

Clifton, would be esteemed as a particular obligation to herself: I hope this amiable woman will be amongst your best of favourites.

Nothing worthy a recital has happened in our family since I left Queen's-square, till the last fortnight, during which time we have enjoyed the company of a very agreeable family from Oxfordshire, a Mrs. Horton, who is a widow, her son, and two daughters; the former seems to be sensible and good humoured, but not one ray of her virtues has reflected on her son, who was a Tony Lumpkin sent abroad to polish, but the animal returned is undefinable: his mother's only fault is, being blindly partial to him.

Mary, the eldest daughter, is a perfect emblem of innocence and purity, she possesses a fund of humour, though under the controul of diffidence, and the fear of offending.—Emma, wild as the wind, witty and good humoured, is the reverse of her sister in every particular instance, except the endowments of the heart: the manners of the one being grave and sentimental, and those of the other lively and
volatile

volatile to an excess. Their persons are equally contrasted; Mary being tall, slender and genteel, with flaxen hair, blue eyes and a delicate complexion; while Emma is a little arch brunette, with black eyes, and hair of the same colour; she entertains herself, perhaps too freely, with the folly of others, yet her satire is such as, though it might better be suppressed, is totally untinged with malice. But here is the wild girl, in *propria persona*, with my hat and shawl in her hand, insisting upon my taking a ramble with her in the park. She is an impetuous creature, and I must submit; however, she favours you by putting an end, *vitement*, to this trifling epistle. Do me the justice to believe, that I am most feelingly interested in your happiness, and your truly sincere friend,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER V.

MISS CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

I Already begin to experience the advantages of society; my mind begins to emerge from the gloom and distress in which it has been involved, and I feel the warmest gratitude for the friendly kindness of the Countess and yourself, which has opened to me a treasure in the countenance of Lady Wilson, whose distinguishing attention, together with numberless civilities from different quarters, have prevailed upon me to enter into several private parties, and have almost seduced from me a consent to appear in public at the ensuing races. I am above disguise, and confess that my heart pleads warmly for a compliance with the proposal. Tell me candidly, if such a step will be attended with any impropriety, and pray consult the Countess, as it is my utmost ambition to possess her esteem and approbation.

I am charmed with the characters of Mrs. Horton and her daughters, as for
Monfieur

Monsieur La Bête, he should be banished from the society of Belmont Castle, being utterly unworthy of such happiness. I have a sort of presentiment, that he means to enlist himself in your service. I can account for the supposition no otherwise than from a perfect conviction, that to see you, converse with you, and to love you, are the same things.

It is strange that parents can be so infatuated! (I mean those who are blessed with good understandings) as to deprive their children of every natural advantage, render them despicable to the world, and torment themselves, by improper indulgences: I have no patience with a fondness, the effects of which are far more fatal than any the most inveterate hatred could produce. In my opinion, such weakness must proceed from a species of self-love, as they purchase a transient gratification for themselves, at the expence of their children's future—perhaps eternal happiness!

Adieu my best friend, let me hear from you soon: if your letter contains a passport to the gaieties of the approaching week,

week, I will not fail to transmit you a minute account of every transaction, yet think not that I wish to bribe the court in my favour:—No! may the free and undisguised dictates of the heart ever preside through the course of our correspondence, is a sentiment which shall always inviolably govern the pen of your sincere friend,

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER VI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

THOUGH I always thought you a sly girl, Fanny, I never took you for a witch before!—Now, indeed, I have my doubts on that head, for as you foretold, this monkey who has seen the world, has this moment been professing the most violent admiration of my *sweet* person, with all the baboon-like grimace of his whole fraternity. Had I possessed harlequin's touchstone of sincerity, I might have converted the high flown language
with

with which he addressed me, which was in the following stile :

“ My adorable lady Louisa, behold with some degree of compassion, a wretch who can exist only under the influence of your smiles ; who presumes only to sue for the faintest ray of hope, with which inestimable comfort, he will glory in the chains which hold him a prisoner to your divine charms,”——into the following——

“ Tho’ you are a cursed *bore*, yet, as even a chan of *ton* must sometimes yield pleasure to convenience, and as you will possess a large independent fortune, besides considerable expectancies, and as I find cash absolutely necessary to clear my estate, continue the splendor of my appearance, and keep my girls with the eclat suitable to a man of my consequence. I say, these considerations ; with your title and connexions thrown into the scale, have induced me to exalt you to the honour of being my wife.”

This, I may safely assert, is the true state of the case, and what woman in her senses would reject so flattering a prospect ?—But the wisest are not at all times

times impervious to error; your simple friend, being blind to her own interest, returned an unequivocal refusal.

I have heard, *par hazard*, (as my mother became acquainted with Mrs. Horton at Bath, and knows little of the family) that our hero's patrimonial estate was very confined, which was the cause of his being instructed in nothing but a love of ale, and the pedigrees of his dogs and horses, as his father had been before him; but a brother of his mother's being killed in America, to whom he was heir, the noble fortune of which he became thus unexpectedly possessed, threw his views and those of his family into a different channel, and master was sent abroad to be made an immense fine gentleman, from whence he has been returned about two years, in which short space of time, he has mortgaged a great part of his uncle's fine estate, to support his unlimited extravagance. What most surprizes me is, that in the *grand monde* he is an universal favourite. I hope his mother and sisters are unacquainted with the predilection with which I am honoured; I fear I could

could scarcely forgive them, if I thought they were instigators of the proposal; though doubtless they would think me highly distinguished by his attention, for he is certainly regarded as a phenomenon by two of the three at least: I have lately fancied Emma is not so blind to his imperfections, as she wishes to appear: I often see her bite her lips, change colour, or affect to hum a tune, at his ridiculous impertinencies: she is lively, and volatile to an excess, and spares nobody's faults but her brother's, and those she wishes (when possible) to draw a veil over; and, indeed, often brings him off in better colours than he deserves. Her mother and sister, on the contrary, think it impossible for him to err; and in their eyes, not only trifles, but follies, are dignified by his utterance. I am at a loss how to reconcile such conduct with their good sense; partiality is the cause, no doubt, but that even carries with it a contradiction; for, is it not natural to wish every perfection centered in the person we love? and must not our fears be in proportion to our wishes, and render us more feelingly alive to the errors of

C

of

of our friends than to those of indifferent people; though at the same time, we may wish to conceal, as well as to correct them.

I have not yet had an opportunity of acquainting my mother with my conquest. It does not require much form in disclosing, as she, no doubt, regards my enamorado in the same contemptible light that I do. She perfectly coincides with Lady Wilson; and, instead of thinking your introduction into public, attended with any impropriety, says, in her opinion, it is the most adviseable plan you can pursue; your loss was certainly great, and as such, has been, and I am convinced ever will be, most feelingly lamented. Though it is a virtue to revere our friends, yet it is a crime to encourage unavailing melancholy. Hesitate not, my dear girl, to try the salutary effects of innocent amusements; nothing can give more genuine delight, than a prospect of your returning happiness, to the sympathetic heart of your sincere and devoted friend,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

MISS FANNY CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

YOUR entertaining packet was delivered into my hands, at the moment I sat down to transmit to you a faithful account of the extraordinary events of last night's ball. A ball! to be recorded in the annals of history, being the first honoured with the presence of so important a personage as your friend. You may laugh! but jesting apart, my consequence is greater than you imagine, as I shall convince you *tout à l'heure*.

But to proceed regularly; it is my duty, first to congratulate your ladyship on the conquest you have obtained. I am quite concerned to find you possess a heart so obdurate, as to be impregnable even to the all-powerful charms of *bon ton*. But why was you so explicit? have you so little of your sex in your disposition, as to enable you to resign the charms of dear coquetry? Will you always confine yourself to the two unequivocal monosyllables *yes* and *no*?

C 2

You

You cannot, my dear, with justice blame Mrs. and Miss Hortons, for the impertinence of their Narcissus. You moralize with the *sageſſe* of fifty, upon the absurdity of their unwarrantable partiality.

I ſhall now claim your attention to the occurrences of the ball, where I made my *entree* about the hour of eight, honoured by the company of Lady Wilſon.

The firſt minuet was begun, and the maſter of the ceremonies called upon me to dance the ſecond; confuſed, diſtreſſed, and trembling, I crawled aukwardly up the room, like a detected thief. So little had I profited by Lady Wilſon's kind inſtructions, who had informed me, that in this polite age, no vulgariſm was ſo unpardonable as diffidence. When I had expoſed myſelf, to the entertainment of every one, my partner led me to my ſeat, and inſtead of retiring, he entered into a familiar converſation with my *chaperon*, which gave me, for the firſt time, an opportunity of obſerving his figure, of which to gratify your curioſity (which is no doubt excited) I will attempt a deſcription. He is middle ſized; his perſon may be deemed

ed the criterion of grace and elegance; he has a complexion moderately good; a handsome forehead, an aquiline nose; dark eye-brows—and eyes!—you might as well expect me to paint the sun in all its lustre,—let it suffice, that he may use Cæsar's motto, and say of hearts what that invincible hero did of legions—"I came, saw, and overcame." You may, suppose my vanity was gratified, when with inimitable grace he sued for the honour of my hand for country dances. Oh! how did my little heart, for the first time, flutter at a beau. This important favour granted, I tripped away to join the gay throng. I waited with the utmost impatience till an opportunity presented itself of making enquiries concerning my partner, whose deportment, as well as the extraordinary respect he obtained from every one, distinguished him from the common race of mortals. My curiosity, however, was soon appeased by Lady Wilson, who informed me that the enchanting hero was Lord Davenant, son of the Earl of Westville;—"I rejoice," added she, "that your first appearance is honoured by the

attention of a man of his fashion and consequence." You cannot think, how I grew up in my own opinion upon this intelligence, I was exalted the head and shoulders in an instant. His Lordship's conversation was elegant, frank and easy, untinctured with any disgusting familiarity, which I own I apprehended, from the disparity of our situations; but his understanding appears to be even superior to his rank, which secures him from presuming upon such superficial advantages: he is certainly a divine creature, it was with no common address, I guarded my heart against the power of charms so captivating.

We danced late, and even when we did retire, I own, for my own part, it was with reluctance: amongst Lord Davenant's numerous accomplishments, must be reckoned his dancing, for in that he even exceeds perfection.

Though the anecdotes of the ball are concluded, I cannot close this letter, without mentioning a simple affair, which has surprized and vexed me considerably.

As my aunt and self were sitting at
breakfast,

breakfast, I saw her toss a tea-cup about, which, as it appeared accidental, I did not regard, till taking a pin and pointing to the grounds of tea which were in it, she cried, “come here, niece, and tell me, if ever you saw so plain a coach and fix.”—“coach and fix,” exclaimed I, “where?” (running to the window).—“Here, here,” cried she, “in this cup.—I’ll lay my life you’ll be married to the nobleman you danced with last night: I’m as *sartin* you’ll be a lady, and ride in your own coach, as that your name is now Clifton.—Why, the very day I heard of my husband’s death, there was as plain a coffin in the cup, as ever was seen; and not a week before, I dreamt, I saw him dressed all in white.”

Distressed, and dreading the disagreeable consequences of her ignorance, I endeavoured to convince her of the folly of such credulity, “sense and reason,” said I, “must inform any common capacity, that the events of futurity are concealed in oblivion, for the wisest motives, and not to be unfolded by the means

“ of any omens whatsoever, much less
“ can it be supposed, that the accidental
“ position of a grain of tea, can have any
“ reference to the future blessings or mis-
“ fortunes of mankind.” All my argu-
ments were unavailing, and produced no
other answers than, “ you shall never make
“ me believe that; and, I know better
“ things.” In short, after exhausting my
wit and patience, in disputing above an
hour on the subject, chagrined *à la mort*,
I retired to my own room, to discharge
my debt to your ladyship. I already an-
ticipate ten thousand embarrassments, and
disquietudes which I must inevitably un-
dergo, if such vulgar impressions cannot
be eradicated from the mind of my poor
aunt. What perplexities, may even the
present whim she has conceived, involve
me in, yet the evil is irremediable, and I
have only the comfortless old saw to re-
flect upon, “ what cannot be cured, must
“ be endured.”

I am engaged this evening to a rout at
Sir Edward Beville's; both himself and lady
are sensible worthy people; their family
consists of a son and a daughter; the latter

I have

I have some acquaintance with. She is a little pert, vain girl: pretty, but insufferably affected; her conversation seldom extends to the fatiguing utterance of a sentence, but is confined within the limits of such exclamations as, divine! charming! heavenly! or, oh you wretch! The last epithet, being a superlative mark of approbation: on the contrary, her dislike is denoted by monstrous, hideous, vile, or some fashionable expression of a similar cast.

Her brother is just returned from the grand tour, and all the Misses are going with premeditated designs against his heart: as the prize is great, you will not oppose my entering the lists, and as it will be necessary to be properly armed, will excuse my quitting you for my toilet—excuse, did I say? I ought rather to congratulate you on your release; so adieu, I fly to conquest,

FANNY CLIFTON.

L E T T E R VIII.

LORD DAVENANT TO FRANCIS FITZHENRY, ESQ.

REJOICE! with me, Frank! lay aside your methodistical cant, and rejoice I say! Nay, you may even rejoice in your own way, as there is now a remote chance of a reformation, for which thou hast been so long labouring in vain; if miracles can be wrought upon me, the divine Fanny Clifton must be the author of them, and not such a whining puppy as thou art, I promise thee.

I left my little termagant (I cannot say I took leave of her) soon after the date of my last; after leaving her notes for two thousand pounds, enclosed in a letter, in which there was neither apologies or reproaches; I thought them equally unnecessary; for, upon my soul, Frank, bad as you think me, she was as culpable in artifice as myself.

You was frequently the topic of conversation at Sutton Abbey; your health was drank every day: your friend Oswald
knows

knows your situation, and gave old Square-toes a few *blessings*, which I dare not repeat: they would be too great a shock to your morality—even I, felt myself offended at them: I detest a reprobate as much as you can: poor Sutton seems to be lost to every enjoyment but hunting, shooting, swearing, and drinking with all ranks, from the vicar to the sexton. But I shall leave the squire to the pleasures of the bottle, whilst I recount the more rational joys of E—— races.

At the ordinary I picked up a little smart ensign, and finding him perfectly conversant with all the private anecdotes of every family in the city, I drove him to the green in my phaeton. As to the race, it was declared from the first, to be a hollow thing, and proved so; therefore I imagine it afforded little spoils to the votaries of the turf; as for any mortification I might experience, I enjoyed an ample compensation in the evening.

Strolling about the ball-room, taking a survey of the beauties around me, undetermined upon which to fix the preference, I was most agreeably surprized by the

entrance of lady Wilson, accompanied by a terrestrial divinity. Before her appearance, I had declined dancing a minuet, but when the master of the ceremonies took this all-captivating angel by the hand, I sued for the honour I had so recently refused. She acquitted herself to *au merveille*, considering (as I have been since informed) that it was her first appearance in public, and that she has not, according to the present custom, thrown aside all diffidence with her leading strings. She plainly demonstrated in all her actions, that timidity is far from being incompatible with elegance.

“ Grace was in *all* her steps : heaven in her eye,
“ In every gesture, dignity and love.”

I soon renewed my acquaintance with lady Wilson (whom I had not seen since I returned from abroad) and in proper time, secured the hand of my charmer for the evening. I could not help pitying a number of poor fellows, who followed my example, but were disappointed, owing to my better fortune. I thought the minuets would never be over, and inwardly cursed them ;

at

at length, however, I was gratified; they ceased, and a general confusion succeeded as usual, every one being eager to display her intrinsic meanness, by exalting herself above her neighbour; whilst the beauteous Fanny modestly took her place at the bottom of the room, where we remained till our attentive Nash, requested us to change our situation, which was an honour I should have attributed to myself, had not the little angel persisted in declining the distinction, which produced an explanation. He said, he was certain, no lady in that room was so deficient in politeness, as to lead down a dance before Miss Clifton, whose family gave her an undoubted right to precedence: at length, far more to avoid controversy, than to support her consequence, she yielded to his entreaties.

We had not danced long, before I was unspeakably astonished by the total eclipse of those charms I had so much admired; don't be alarmed! it was not the fair face of a rival beauty which effected this phenomenon, but the charms of her own mind which, as far as the soul is superior

perior to the body, transcended it in beauty.

Here is the treasure which I have so long fought in vain! A woman possessed of personal charms to excite my admiration, and mental ones to fix my esteem! an esteem which she is certain to retain, if she is not too easily won; for that every woman may be won, with the assistance of time and opportunity, I have had too many incontestible proofs to entertain the least doubt.—I see! I feel! that Fanny Clifton was born to conquer the inconstancy of my temper, and may, if she pleases, secure my affections for life. In my own way though! an angel from heaven could not induce me to put on matrimonial fetters, unless she could transform that ideal virtue to which they all pretend, into a reality.

I heard Lady Beville ask my little enslaver, to meet a party at her house: the invitation was accepted, and my heart danced to be included in the treaty: when I returned to my lodgings, I found a card to desire me to meet my friend and fellow traveller, Ned Beville, who is just arrived.

How

How I should at any other time have rejoiced at the rencontre, for there is not an honefter fellow breathing—but then, he is also devilishly handsome! besides, having a most insinuating address; for which reasons, I should have been better pleased had he remained absent a few months longer, at least, till I had rendered myself of too much consequence to fear a rival. Should my hopes be frustrated, it will be the first love affair in which I ever failed, as it is the first which ever interested my heart. Upon my soul, I am quite vapoured; this sudden appearance of, almost, the only man I should dread, looks ominous.

We left the assembly at one, and it is now four, as a neighbouring clock informs me. If I waited for a summons from the god of sleep, I might scribble away till noon: I am now under the dominion of a more tumultuous deity. Yet, though my pillow will not grant me repose, it is a friend to meditation, and with such heavenly beauties as I have to contemplate, it is much more desirable

able than the choicest blessings Morpheus can bestow.

Miss Clifton, I am informed, is a grand-daughter of the late Earl of Carlton, and niece to the present; notwithstanding which, she is her own mistress, though under the guardianship of an aunt, (a sister of her mother's) who is a mean low bred woman; the only relation who condescends to own her. This unnatural desertion is not owing to any fault of her own, but, because she is the daughter of a man who married to disoblige them.

This, I suppose, will find thee tacked to thy father's armed chair, yawning to the nineteenth repetition of an old fox chase. Poor devil! I pity thee, though thou art better any where than here, for I know thou would'st take a malicious pleasure in counteracting the schemes of thy friend,

DAVENANT.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

MUST I wish you joy, Fanny, or condole with you on the dreadful devastation the little god of love has wrought in your heart? You fly to conquest indeed!—First endeavour, to recover your own liberty, and if that is irretrievable, make reprisals, for vanquished you are, most certainly. Well, my dear, I sincerely wish it may not be a hopeless passion, but that Mrs. Forbes's prognostications may, in *process of time*, come to pass.

Seriously, my dear, (for in spite of this raillery, my friend's happiness is a subject which too nearly concerns me to trifle with) keep a guard upon your heart: suffer not your affections to be too far engaged to an object unworthy of them.—Where, indeed, is the man who deserves them? Was Lord Davenant possessed of a kindred soul, how happy should I be in the prospect of an union, that would place my Fanny in her proper sphere; but I
am

am sorry to say, his universal character is that of an unprincipled libertine; from which, Heaven shield my sweet friend.

This vile Horton persists in tormenting me, notwithstanding my endeavours to make my answer decisive. The whole family have entered into a league against me, and what is much worse, have so wrought upon the mind of my mother, that she encourages their designs, and has given them leave to try the force of their rhetoric. She certainly does not wish such an union to take place, but has had a promise wrung from her not to oppose their suit, under some false pretence. I console myself however with the reflection, that she will never expect me to sacrifice my happiness in concurrence with her wishes.

My swain has proposed a jaunt to see some famous ruins, about twenty miles from hence: as to myself, I shall make no reply to the request, but shall be governed by the determination of the rest of the party; though I really hope, the scheme may be carried into execution—any thing to diversify the scene.

Lady

Lady Wilfon has written to the Countess, with an urgent request to give me leave to accompany her to town after Christmas, and remain with her till she returns into the country; she says she has obtained your promise for that purpose: this obliging invitation is in part accepted, and my mother permits me to spend one month with her ladyship during her residence in London: indeed, my ever indulgent parent would have complied with the whole, if I could have submitted to the thought of leaving her so long alone in her unhappy situation.

You cannot conceive with what delight I look forward to the gay prospects presented to my view, by the kind civility of Lady Wilfon, or how I am charmed with the idea of sharing in the gaiety of a town life, with the friend who will ever remain unrivaled in the affections of her

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER X.

MISS CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

HA! ha! ha! I congratulate your ladyship on the discovery you have made, but I more fervently congratulate myself that my own heart pleads not guilty, to the charge. Heaven forbid that it should so soon devote itself to slavery. No! no! under the guidance of my prudent brain, it may enjoy many smiling years of blissful liberty. In love, with Lord Davenant! oh! horrible! could you decree your friend no better fate than a hopeless passion? You are not acquainted with my language, I find; I hope, your ladyship does not think that every divine fellow, and every charming man, is irresistible:—Lord, child, they are only a kind of harmless musquito which swarm about every pretty woman, and are brushed away with her fan, without any injury whatever, except infecting her with a prevalent disease called *vanity*. Oh! I can tell you of divinities by the hundred,—Apollo himself

self was introduced to me the other evening, in the person of Mr. Beville: his conversation is delightful, he is infinitely sensible, perfectly well bred, and moreover, remarkably handsome—yet, with all these accomplishments, he certainly does want the agreeable vivacity of Lord Davenant.

Shall I give you the picture of an E—— route—such a *melange*. First upon the list, I shall present to you Colonel and Mrs. Calcot, with their two blooming daughters, the former is a respectable veteran officer, who, after having lost an eye in the service of his country, retired to the peaceable circle of his own fire side, and the comforts of matrimony, in which, I believe, he still submits to discipline. His wife is a little fat woman, of the Dutch make, whose commands are as irrevocable as those of his general. Her daughters likewise feel the force of her authority; they appear to be weak and uninformed—but perhaps, as an absolute monarchy seldom excels in arts and sciences, so their natural genius may have been obscured, if not entirely subverted,
by

by the tyranny under which they have been educated.

As a contrast, I shall now introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. Atkins, who have been married about half a year. The gentleman is a little thin, scraggy, ugly man, perpetually crying—"my dearest Sally, "I am sure you feel a prodigious air from "that window, do oblige me, my love, "by changing your seat," or "the heat "of that fire is more than you can support—let me fetch a screen," &c. &c. The lady, who is the shadow of her husband, acts her part in this tender scene, so as to make it compleatly ridiculous, and to afford entertainment for the whole company.

There was also a Mrs. Rumour, a little spruce woman, with her linen well starched, and a quick sharp voice, who flew about the room like common fame, stopping here and there to open her budget, which abounded with anecdotes, and secret intelligence of every family in the town: not even the company present escaped; for where a confident assertion was dangerous, a sly invidious whisper answered the purpose,

pose, and operated more powerfully. I happened to sit by her a few minutes, in which time I became better acquainted with the characters of my neighbours, (whether real or fictitious I know not) than I should have been in as many years, without this good lady's assistance. I have since heard, that I did not escape a share of her malevolence: I was represented by her as splenetic, proud, and overbearing, impertinent to my aunt, and insolent to my servants; that I was ashamed of the former, and would not suffer her to appear in company with me, and to crown the whole, that I was mean spirited and avaricious; which, as she justly observed, was wonderful and almost incredible in such a child: that as for herself, she could scarcely have believed it, and should still think it false, if she had not received the account from a particular friend of mine, who was perfectly acquainted with my disposition.

Lady Wilson, whom she happened to address, waited the full extent of her malice without interrupting it; but the moment her spleen was exhausted, she warmly

warmly undertook my defence, and so humbled her adversary, that she sate mute the remainder of the evening: her ladyship said, she should have asked my pardon publicly, but that she thought I should be more fluttered than gratified by such a submission, in which she judged very properly of my sentiments.—What a world we live in! how is it possible to steer clear of censure, when a woman whom I (so far from having offended) never saw before, nor knew even by name, can enjoy a satisfaction in destroying my reputation, and rendering me despicable to the world?—Well! as out of most evils some advantage may be derived, may the reflection of this incident constantly remind me, that the eyes of Argus watch over my steps, and that although I have nobody to guide, there are thousands ready to condemn my actions.

The chapter of oddities concludes, with my *good friend*, unless you think a pert conceited coxcomb dignified with a sash and gorget, deserves a place in the list: his name is Plume, Brazen would have been as applicable.

I shall

I shall now pass on to the amiables, who I am happy to say, were so predominant, that you must be contented with an abstract of the most distinguished.

Foremost in that class, I shall place a Miss Parker, the daughter of a capital banker, late of this city, who in his life time was reputed a man of considerable property. He educated his daughter suitably to that appearance, and it was generally supposed, that he would bestow upon her an immense fortune, which you will readily believe, secured her attention from all quarters: her company was sought by both sexes; her taste universally approved: happy was the milliner who had her name in her books, and the tire-woman who had the good fortune to alter a sleeve for Miss Parker, no longer wanted employment. This dangerous adulation, a precipice so fatal to young minds, made no impression (at least no injurious one) on the fair Maria's; she heard the praises of the multitude with pleasure and gratitude; she attributed them to the good nature of the world; but instead of overcoming a natural diffidence and distrust of

D

her

her own merit, it excited in her breast a noble emulation to deserve them.

Alas! what a cruel reverse to this amiable state succeeded the sudden death of her father! Instead of the wealth he was supposed to possess, the residue, after his affairs were settled, scarcely amounted to fifteen hundred pounds: this trifling sum her brother, who is in an advantageous station at Bengal, generously gave up his claim to in favour of his orphan sister.

The dear girl, who had so well borne the intoxicating glare of prosperity, supported herself with equal propriety under the frowns of adversity: but alas! though her mind is unaffected by the sudden reverse of fortune, such a change never fails to display the chameleon properties of this unsteady world; she now receives pity, where she was before treated with respect, and those people who a short time since thought themselves honoured by her acquaintance, now pride themselves upon their benevolence, in merely behaving towards her with common civility. For this account, I am obliged to a worthy clergyman, who is her guardian, and executor

to her father's will; it had prepared me to esteem and admire her, but the ideas I had formed were far short of the perfections she is mistress of; as the last and least of them, I shall say, her person is elegant, her air graceful, her face, though not regularly beautiful, is adorned with an open good humoured countenance, eyes expressive of the most enchanting sensibility, fine eyebrows, fine teeth, and fine hair. What a libel it is upon the world, that such an assemblage of perfections cannot secure respect, unsupported by the idols, family and fortune.

A cruel indifference and *nonchalance* were conspicuous in the behaviour of every one to the charming unfortunate: excepting only the two beaux, Lord Davenant and Mr. Beville; the rest of the worthies were not proof against the fashionable weakness, and with such a blot, their characters cannot appear to advantage, after the superior brilliancy of Miss Parker's. I will therefore pass them over in silence. Miss Beville, by my desire, introduced me to this lovely woman, and I think, there is already a foundation esta-

blished for a lasting friendship between us. Don't be jealous! I do not agree with Gay, that

“ Friendship, like love is but a name,

“ Unless to one you stint the flame.”

No one, I believe, is more sensible of the force of friendship than myself; yet, notwithstanding my affection for your ladyship, it does not lead me to suppose you monopolize all the virtues the world can produce, nor will you be so unjust as to be offended, if I esteem in another person the same perfections which attach me to yourself.

Our party consisted of about thirty. I think the E—— routs, though not upon a par with the purlieus of St. James's, far eclipse those of Kentish-Town, described by Master Bobby Pendragon. Mercy! what an enormous letter I have written! I am determined, if possible, to confine my next scroll within the limits of one sheet of paper, and shall conclude this without further ceremony, as all professions of friendship, &c. are, I hope, unnecessary from your

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

I Have just received a mark of friendship, of the most generous, and (whilst I remain ignorant of its author) of the most oppressing nature. You know I have a sister, whose amiable qualifications gained the affections of a young gentleman, who I believe in every respect but fortune, was truly deserving of such a treasure: the attachment soon became mutual, but unfortunately did not meet with my father's sanction; the poor girl would have sacrificed her happiness to her duty, but that did not appease his wrath; his rage was implacable, which he was continually venting in the bitterest acrimony, inso-much, that for some time she supported a life of wretchedness, till to compleat her misery, he selected from his fox-hunting friends, a man, who, without consulting her inclinations, he insisted upon her marrying by that day month, leaving her no alternative, but being turned out of

doors: this treatment, with her lover's importunities, joined to my advice, and promises that she should not be a burthen upon his fortune after I had the power to prevent it, induced her to consent to a private marriage, immediately after which they left England, to live in a less expensive country, for poor Osborne's (my brother-in-law) fortune is at present small, though at the death of an uncle it will be very ample.

I was determined to testify my regard for my sister by something more substantial than promises; and therefore raised a thousand pounds upon exorbitant interest, which I sent after them to the continent: I own the scanty pittance my father allows me, ill admits of any deduction, but the pleasure I experience, even in this trifling act of kindness to a beloved sister, is a sufficient recompence for the difficulties I have sustained.

This morning I was surprized by the receipt of a note from the usurer, enclosing the bond, and informing me that the debt was discharged by an unknown hand.

I am quite at a loss to guess who is the
author

author of this transaction, but that I know you are ignorant of the affair, my suspicions would point to your lordship. I shall be absolutely unhappy, till I know the friend to whom I am obliged; if you are by any unaccountable chance the person, pray let me know immediately, and I will transmit you a proper security.

I do not know whether there is most cause to be pleased or concerned at your attachment to Miss Clifton; if she is capable of effecting a reformation in your principles, there will be reason to rejoice: but Heaven avert! that her innocence should fall a prey to your machinations.

That a man possessed of the least tincture of humanity, honour, or generosity, can delight in the seduction of innocence, seems to me a solecism in nature; and nothing but the perfect knowledge I have of your lordship's disposition, could convince me such a character existed.

I am still in confinement; my father's gout continues, and he is as cross as ever; in short, I have not one enjoyment except your correspondence, therefore pray bestow it more liberally on a poor prisoner,

who whether fettered or free, will ever remain your sincere friend,

FRANCIS FITZHENRY.

LETTER XII.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

PRAY thee Frank, let Miss Clifton alone: have I not already told thee she has a better guardian in her own breast than thy sophistry: why then, for Heaven's sake, will you torment me with so unprofitable a subject?

I own I paid the money you mention; but as to the manner by which I became acquainted with your owing it, I cannot say it was the most direct. The truth is, one of my fellows meeting with your Joseph, joined with him in a tankard of ale, for old acquaintance sake, over which the whole business was revealed, and by way of hair-dressing news, was related at second hand to your humble servant. If Joe is a sufferer from this little breach of secrecy, I shall condemn myself for betraying

traying him, therefore on my account, you must forgive him; indeed I believe no poor fellow ever had his master's interest more at heart than he has, and I am sure it was impossible for him to retain a secret which did you so much honour.

As for the bond you talk of, the moment I receive it, it shall pass from my hands into the fire. I wonder how you could entertain an idea that I would accept of any security from you; what is a thousand pounds between us? Suppose our situations reversed, would not you do the same for me? If you would not, send me the bond, and treat me as an usurer: but on the contrary, if your purse would be open to me, (which I am convinced it would) I must insist upon your never mentioning the subject more, but that you will on any emergency draw upon my banker as upon your own; he will have orders to answer your draughts; nothing can so perfectly convince me of your friendship as complying with my request: you need not fear any inconvenience on my side, for whilst your father's foible is severity to his children, the only one of

mine has been too unlimited an indulgence. Besides the noble stipend I enjoy from his munificence, my aunt Richlieu bequeathed me a legacy of sixty thousand pounds: so you see I have more money than I know what to do with, therefore you only save it from worse purposes: but from henceforth let the subject cease, and believe me ever yours.

DAVENANT.

LETTER XIII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

SINCE I wrote last, I have been engaged in an adventure! Not much in the Arcadian stile, I confess, for instead of finding a lover—Oh! dire misfortune! I have lost one.

The other morning as the female Hortons (their hopeful brother being gone to Sir Fletcher Beaumont's, who to reverse the words of Hamlet, is a little less than *kin*, and more than *kind*) and myself were taking a stroll, I was thus accosted by a poor little bare-footed boy—"Do, pray you good
" lady

“ lady, come into our house; there’s young
“ madam’s fawn down dead, and my
“ mammy’s freckned out on her wits.”—
We did not let the child repeat his request,
but followed him into a little cottage,
where we found a genteel looking young
woman in a fit, supported by a poor cot-
tager, mother to our little guide.

Though no three people could be more
alarmed or helpless in such a situation,
than we were, yet we fortunately had suf-
ficient presence of mind to make use of our
smelling bottles, by which, with water
and chaffing the temples, her recovery
in time was effected. The moment she
had regained her senses, her eyes were cast
upon a letter which lay open upon the
ground, and bursting into a violent agony
of tears, she exclaimed with a look of
horror,—“ That letter, ladies, that vile
“ letter! has reduced me to the state you
“ see—how little do I deserve this good-
“ ness?—did you know the wretched ob-
“ ject of your kindness, I fear you would
“ blame yourselves for the compassion you
“ have shewn.” Her situation seemed
truly deplorable; whatever might have

been her former faults, her present remorse seemed so severe, that no person with common humanity could withhold their pity.

We assured her, that our sole wish was to render her service, without the smallest curiosity, or desire to enquire into any circumstances she might wish to conceal.

“ No, madam,” said she, “ to conceal
“ my crimes, would be to persist in them
“ —perhaps Heaven, in its infinite mercy
“ to a penitent sinner, has in your bene-
“ volence, opened to me an asylum from
“ misery. Suffer me, dear ladies, to lay
“ before you the whole of my unhappy
“ situation.

“ I was born at B——, in the county
“ of S——; my father, whose name was
“ Mostyn, was a grocer, and generally
“ esteemed an honest, worthy and sensible
“ man: he took great pains in forming
“ my mind to the strictest principles of
“ religion and virtue, and as he was at
“ that time in affluent circumstances, gave
“ me what, for our station in life, might
“ be called a good education.

“ By various misfortunes, which it is
“ not necessary to particularize, he be-
“ came a bankrupt. Soon after this un-
“ happy event, a legacy was left me by a
“ distant relation, which I earnestly pres-
“ sed my father to put into trade; with
“ much persuasion he consented to risque
“ one half, and with the other, he unfor-
“ tunately placed me with a milliner in
“ great repute near St. James’s.

“ In her service I became acquainted
“ with language and manners very diffe-
“ rent from what I had been accustomed
“ to at B——; at first I felt shocked and
“ disgusted at the indecent levity of my
“ companions: but too soon, alas! these
“ sensations subsided: I no longer heard
“ them with horror, but in time imbibed
“ no inconsiderable share of their senti-
“ ments—so fatal to youth are the effects
“ of evil communication. My mind being
“ thus depraved, I became a dupe to the
“ machinations of a young man of fa-
“ shion, whose name was Horton,” (only
“ conceive the situation of his sisters upon
“ this discovery,) “ who having seen me in
“ the shop, bribed my mistress to assist
“ his

“ his designs. Yet my heart was not so
“ totally corrupted, or my conscience so
“ conscious, as to suffer me to exist in this
“ fallen state with impunity: I now be-
“ gan truly to value that virtue, which I
“ had disregarded, I soon became fatally
“ convinced that happiness and iniquity
“ were incompatible: those pangs which
“ I knew would break the hearts of my
“ poor affectionate parents, already by
“ anticipation rent my own. In this
“ dreadful state of horror and despair, I
“ made an effort (though I could not re-
“ cover my innocence) not to enhance
“ my crime: I confined myself constantly
“ to my work, and firmly determined
“ never more to behold my betrayer, whose
“ name I execrated. During this pa-
“ roxysm of silent misery, there was an
“ alarm circulated, that a valuable piece
“ of lace was missed, and my mistress
“ soon after confidently charged me with
“ the theft: this accusation I heard with
“ the utmost composure, secretly wishing
“ that my conscience would equally acquit
“ me of every crime, as of the one she
“ alledged against me. The general cry
“ was,

“ was, search her drawers, search her,
“ drawers.—‘ Come, come, madam,’ said
“ my mistress, ‘ give me your keys in-
“ stantly.’ I refused, however, to resign
“ them to any one, but consented to attend
“ her and open every box, drawer, and
“ trunk I possessed, for her inspection.
“ This proposal was agreed to—but what
“ was my consternation and distress when
“ the first I unlocked presented to my
“ view the horrid lace—which my mistress
“ seized upon with fiend-like avidity, and
“ loaded me with a torrent of abuse, to
“ which I was obliged to submit with re-
“ signation, plainly perceiving, that any
“ vindication against a scheme framed
“ with so much subtlety, must be unavail-
“ ing: as an act of lenity, after having
“ taken from me all my apparel, except
“ what I then wore, she turned me out of
“ doors. I had not wandered in this for-
“ lorn situation many paces, before I met
“ my vile seducer, who was upon the
“ watch, as he has since acknowledged,
“ for the success of his own diabolical
“ plan. In this disgraceful situation, no
“ alternative presented itself—I must
“ either

“ either avail myself of his dishonourable
“ proposals, or submit myself to the most
“ aggravated horrors of penury and want :
“ a state, which, tremendous as it appeared,
“ seemed preferable to meeting the
“ eyes of parents in my degraded state,
“ whose minds were the residence of virtue
“ and purity : thus, I once more fell a victim
“ to the invidious snares of an abandoned
“ libertine—abandoned to every
“ species of villany which can pervert
“ humanity ; notwithstanding which, he
“ condescended to assume the cloak of
“ sentiment—and pretended that the violence
“ of his passion overcame his reason,
“ and hurried him on to an act of treachery,
“ contrary to his principles, which, I
“ should one day experience, were strictly
“ honourable.—Voluntarily and repeatedly
“ he has sworn that it was his intention
“ to marry me, when one obstacle,
“ which was at present a curb upon his
“ inclinations, was removed. About half
“ a year I lived in lodgings of his providing,
“ in Holborn, from whence he
“ brought me hither ; his attentions and
“ affection for me, have evidently de-
“ creased

“ creased, and latterly those promises of marriage, which at first engrossed a considerable part of his conversation, seem to have been totally forgot ; and when the other day I ventured to remind him of them, his abuse was insupportable. From that time, I have never seen him till this morning, when he dropped that infamous scroll, which has discovered to me the precipice, - upon the brink of which I stand, and must inevitably fall, unless protected by your humanity—but read the execrable paper, and you cannot surely consign a poor wretch to an abyss of misery, from which she can never be extricated.” She then gave me the enclosed, which I shall leave you to peruse, and pursue my narrative by the next post, as my hand is at present so much cramped, that it is with difficulty I guide my pen to say,

I am truly your's,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

SAMUEL HORTON, ESQ. TO EDWARD BURTON, ESQ.

THE devil's in the dice if I don't conquer this fair tyrant at last—fair! did I say?—I believe she is—but foregad, Ned, I don't care a rush whether she is black, brown or fair; she has more attractive charms, or she would never catch me in the matrimonial noose: there is a certain beautiful yellow ore, that has more magnetic power than the loadstone, and can box about the human heart to any point of the compass. Gold is the idol I worship!—and gold I shall enjoy—I have a delightful scheme in embryo. I have given up all hopes from flames, darts, and the old artillery of Cupid; nothing will answer but some deep laid stratagem, for the cunning devil smokes me. My plan is, to cast a slur upon her reputation, and then it will be my turn to be wooed.—Thus I intend to proceed: preparatory to my operations I have already proposed a jaunt to see the ruins of ——— Abbey, which

which is about twenty miles from this Gothic mansion:—the party is to consist of my mother, sisters, her ladyship and your humble servant. A coach being a horrible vehicle upon such an occasion, as it is more calculated to conceal, than display the beauties of the country, a chaise and four is preferred, which with my gig, will contain us all; etiquette will oblige the obdurate dame to commit herself to my protection. The sober ones must lead the way of course, to restrain the impetuosity of the charioteer, which will be a capital stroke in my favour, for on our return, one of my horses *may possibly* loose a shoe, and then you know common humanity to the poor beast, will oblige me to drive slow, and *perhaps*, as misfortunes seldom come single, a wheel *may* fly off, and our carriage be otherwise damaged. In such a dilemma, what can be done?—The rest of the party quite out of reach;—no smith near to repair our shattered vehicle; night approaching fast, and no “Cynthia shining above” to dissipate its gloom; no inn within ten miles; nothing better than a little farm house, a considerable

able distance from the road, and that *providentially* discovered by a pair of sharp eyes, just before the close of twilight, which *entre nous*, were greatly assisted by a discerning fellow who happened to survey the country a few days before.

In such a situation, we must be inevitably obliged to repair to this miserable hovel, while my servant (the only one with us) is sent forward for the coach; but he is such a miserable sot, it is *ten to one* he stops by the way and forgets his errand; so that with crosses upon crosses, we must submit to remain in our habitation till the next day is far advanced, as it will be impossible for the utmost vigilance of our friends to discover our retreat. After all, I assure you, I entertain no designs against the lady's honour, but that is a circumstance I intend to keep secret from the world, as I wish the affair to be generally regarded in a very different light: it will be very easy to persuade the credulous multitude, that my companion was as deep in the plot as myself, and to convert all those complacent smiles, ever attendant upon rank and fortune, into
con-

contemptuous sneers and humiliating inuendos: this, if I mistake not, will effectually humble her pride, and she will be obliged to the man whom she now despises, to restore to her that respect, of which she does not suspect him of depriving her, perfectly convinced of the propriety and delicacy of his behaviour upon the occasion. This is my scheme, and on Wednesday next, I hope to put it in execution.

As you know of no friend willing to take this plague, Kitty Mostyn, off my hands, I shall dispatch her to Mother M——'s to-morrow: it is not the first good office of the kind the old dame has done for me: the little devil begins to grow troublesome: she looks upon the vows which I made to marry her as binding—poor fool! perjury is new to her at present, but she will learn better in time: besides, it was her own perverseness which obliged me to say more than I ever intended to perform.

I am going to spend the day with Sir Fletcher Beaumont, and shall put this in my pocket for him to frank. I know you love mischief as well as myself, and
will

will wish success to your brother in iniquity.

SAMUEL HORTON.

LETTER XV.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

I Have a presentiment that this will find my Fanny pouring forth the grateful effusions of an affectionate heart, in pious thanks for her friend's miraculous escape. Miss Mostyn has also had great cause for gratitude to the Almighty, for her deliverance from infamy; and indeed her penitence and remorse are suitable to the occasion. But to proceed with regularity, I must return to the cottage.

Miss Mostyn, when her narrative was concluded, besought us in the most persuasive, though at the same time artless terms, to shelter her from the villanous designs which were formed against her.

Miss Hortons continued silent the whole time, and indeed, if one might judge by their visible confusion, and the deep sighs which seemed to force a passage from their oppressed

oppressed bosoms, they were almost deprived of the power of speech. Had not my anxiety been wholly engrossed by the distressed Miss Mostyn, they would have claimed a large share of my compassion. Though you may have cause to complain of the prolixity of my stile, the poor girl found me very alert in my determination to favour her return to virtue. I sent immediately for the coach, in which we conveyed her to the castle. On our road thither, a thought struck me, that she might supply the place of Watson, who had left me last week in order to superintend her father's house, who keeps an inn, and has lately lost his wife. This intention I did not choose to acquaint her with, till I had the Countess's permission, as her situation was doubtless a very objectionable one, though the manner of our finding her, the artlessness of her story, with the corroborating circumstance of Horton's letter, were great proofs of her veracity.

Upon our arrival, I conducted her to my apartment, where I desired her to remain till the wretch and his servants were finally departed.

I then

I then went to the Countess, and had the happiness to find her perfectly satisfied with my conduct: she kindly told me I had shewn a benevolence which charmed her. "Consider, my dear," said she, "if
" the young woman proves worthy of your
" kindness, which I do not doubt, what
" a heartfelt pleasure you must enjoy in
" having preserved merit from destruction—on the other hand, had you, like
" too many scrupulous ladies, scoffed at
" the poor unfortunate, and through a false
" delicacy, have disregarded, and left her a
" prey to that sin in which she was involved,
" you would have taken upon yourself a part of all her future crimes, and
" have been the real instrument of all the
" miseries she must have endured in consequence of them. Even if she does
" not answer our expectations, but on
" the contrary, abuses your kindness, the
" consciousness of having acted right, and
" from motives of charity; that you have
" used your utmost endeavours (though
" ineffectually) to reclaim a fallen sister,
" and recall her to the paths of virtue,
" will be a sufficient reward for any trouble
" or

“ or vexation she can possibly occasion
“ you. Believe me, my dear, the impla-
“ cability of one part of our sex towards
“ the other, encourages vice much more
“ than represses it.” Oh! my Fanny,
had I acted otherwise, than I have done,
with what humiliating sensations must I
have heard such noble sentiments. The
dear woman was greatly affected by my
escape, and poured forth the most fervent
thanks to Providence for its divine inter-
ference.

The perfidy of Horton shocked and
astonished her:—she blamed his mother
for having represented his character in so
different a light from what it deserved—
“ yet,” said she, “ we must consider,
“ that great allowances are due to the par-
“ tiality of a parent, and her present suf-
“ ferings ought to eradicate every trace of
“ her former duplicity.” No sooner were
these words uttered, than a message was
delivered from the afflicted ladies, desiring
we would excuse their appearance at din-
ner, and requesting an interview with us
in their own apartments—never was grief
more strongly delineated than on the coun-

tenance of Mrs. Horton, nor were her daughters less affected than herself: such a scene must have drawn a sympathetic tear from the eye of a stoic. The Countess too fatally experienced, alas! in the nature of human woe—soothed, persuaded and gently chided by turns, till at length she had succeeded beyond her expectations; when the following note arrived, addressed to Mrs. Horton, and destroyed the effects of her friendly endeavours.—

“ A ridiculous affair, which perhaps may
 “ give some offence to the Countess of
 “ Belmont, and that little prude her daughter,
 “ prevents my return to the castle,
 “ instead of which, I am now upon my
 “ journey to town, and egad, upon the
 “ whole, I think I have a happy escape,
 “ for the country begins to be a cursed
 “ bore. I suppose your route will be towards
 “ Oxfordshire. Be so good as to
 “ send the things I have left, after me. I
 “ suppose I shall see you in the summer,
 “ though not till it is far advanced, as I
 “ shall not leave London till after the
 “ birthday. S. HORTON.”

There is a specimen of the happy *non-chalance*

balance of a man of fashion! who can trample on all the laws of honour, and implant anguish in the breast of his parent, never to be assuaged, with the same ease and elegance, that he taps his snuff-box and takes his rappee.

That misery which had in some degree subsided, now returned with double vigour: the agitation of Mrs. Horton's spirits became truly alarming, nor were her daughters much less affected; but by the skillful assistance of our friend Doctor Wallace, they escaped those consequences which we had too much cause to apprehend, and left us yesterday in a state of greater composure than we had any reason to hope. I am sincerely concerned, that no persuasions could prevail upon them to lengthen their visit, they are a most charming trio; my esteem for them can never be impaired by their unfortunate connexion with a wretch, whose villany should be exposed for the good of the public, if it was not for the consideration of the amiable family to whom he belongs.

Our family is now reduced to poor old Multon, my mother and self; I am afraid

we shall soon lose the daily benediction of of the former, as he droops fast: indeed he has long been in a state of childhood, therefore life, to him, cannot be desirable. He was chaplain to my grandfather, and has lived in the family ever since, loved and respected by every body, and is now in his 89th year.

Think not, because other subjects have usurped the rights to which your friendly letter had an undubitable claim, that I am less obliged or entertained by the anecdotes it contained. I think E——, from your description, a most delightful place, and envy you the enjoyments it affords—but take care of your heart—"a word to the wise,"—you know! My mother unites in every good wish with your ever sincere and affectionate friend,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

MISS FANNY CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

ADVENTURES indeed, my dear!—
What a despicable wretch is Horton!
—How happy is the poor Miss Mostyn,
in finding such a protectress!—May your
benevolence be rewarded in her future
penitence and gratitude. Oh! that the
monster who betrayed her could meet with
his deserts; but no laws reach the enor-
mity of his crimes.

“ Little villans must submit to fate,

“ Whilst great ones may enjoy the world in state.”

I grieve for his mother and sisters,
though, I own I cannot help feeling a
degree of resentment mixt with my com-
passion for Mrs. Horton, when I consider
the misery in which you would have been
involved, had you become a dupe to her
designs. Providence, however, has mer-
cifully interceded in your behalf, and Mrs.
Horton, no doubt, sees and feels acutely

the error into which her partiality seduced her.

I was alarmed in a most extraordinary manner the other night at the play. The House was uncommonly crouded: Mr. Sheridan's School for Scandal being performed for the benefit of a favourite actresses. Lord Davenant undertook to secure seats for Lady Wilson, your humble servant, and himself. Her ladyship took a family dinner with my aunt and me, and we arrived at the theatre before his lordship, which proved an unfortunate circumstance. We found nobody in the box but the servant who kept our places, and him we very imprudently dismissed. A few minutes afterwards a young officer in the naval uniform, came staggering into the box, and seated himself by me. Lady Wilson pulled my sleeve, and asked me why I did not inform the fellow the seat belonged to Lord Davenant; I replied, "that I durst not speak to him, he was so much in liquor."—"Well then," said she, "you will see what consequences will ensue: if his lordship finds him, he will not request his removal in the gentle

“gentle terms you would use upon
“such an occasion, and the result will
“be a quarrel.” This intimation inspired me with courage, and I ventured to say, “Sir, I fear there is some mistake,
“as I believe that seat is engaged by
“Lord Davenant.”—“Is it so, my pretty
“dear,” said the brute, “then his lordship must shift for himself, for by G—
“I’ll stay where I am. What the devil,
“though I am no lord, I have as much
“right to sit by a pretty girl as any lord
“in the kingdom,” at that moment his lordship appeared, and the man was silent immediately, but gave an odd leer, which my fears interpreted into an unfavourable omen.

Lord Davenant asked if he was a friend of mine: I replied in the negative, but begged and intreated that he would not contend for the seat, as it was evident he knew not what he did; and as the back bench was luckily vacant, there was no necessity for it: he politely granted my request, and suffered the intruder to keep his station, but after some time, finding that he became troublesome and impertinent to

me, he endeavoured to engage him in conversation, and when he found every other method ineffectual to secure me from his violence, he asked him in a half jesting tone, to change seats, saying, “ I think it is not fair that you should engross that seat the whole evening : I have given it up very peaceably one half, which is certainly as much as you can expect.”—“ Expect, Sir !” reiterated he, with an oath, “ what do you mean by expect ? I expect, Sir, to be treated like a gentleman, and if you don’t know how to behave like one, by G— Sir, I’ll teach you ;” was the brutish reply he received. “ This is language, Sir,” said his lordship, “ that would not escape with impunity in any other time or situation than the present ; but I do not think it necessary to testify my courage, by resenting an insult to a man who is not in a state to judge of propriety.”—“ What !” cried the wretch, “ you would insinuate that I am drunk, but I am as sober as yourself, by G—, so don’t think to screen your cowardly soul by such a pretence, but
“ draw

“ draw and defend yourself.”—“ Come,
“ come, put up your sword, young man,”
replied his lordship, “ and if you are so
“ bent upon fighting, in the morning you
“ shall be humoured, but I am determin-
“ ed not to take the unfair advantage
“ your situation would afford me. Was
“ I to meet you upon the unequal terms
“ we stand at present, I should regard
“ myself as no better than an assassin :”

this answer only served to add fuel to the flame. As they grew more incensed, my alarm encreased, till at length overpowered by my terrors, I fell lifeless into the arms of Lady Wilson. What succeeded till I found myself in a coach with her ladyship, Mr. Beville, and Lord Davenant, I know not : they all shewed me the most attentive assiduity, which I shall ever remember with gratitude : the latter reproached himself as the cause of my indisposition, of which I very readily acquitted him, as I am perfectly convinced no one could have conducted himself with more propriety upon a similar occasion, than he had done. He seemed pleased with the approbation I expressed, yet I

observed he wished to change the subject, from which I conjectured there were further ill consequences to be dreaded, but as no expedient occurred by which I could prevent them, I thought proper to conceal my apprehensions for the present; for what arguments could I use? I knew Lord Davenant was perfectly cool, and that he had exerted every effort consistent with honour, to avoid fighting, it was not likely that he would subject himself to be stigmatized for a coward, to oblige me; I therefore stifled my feelings as much as possible, and assuming an air of composure, appeared to rejoice that the affair was so happily concluded. When they set me down at my own door, more dead than alive, Lord Davenant, contrary to all his former behaviour, scarcely spoke, and shrunk back in his seat without attempting to hand me from the coach.—What could be the cause of so sudden a reverse? he could not certainly resent my having been accidentally and most unfortunately accessory to the quarrel in which he was involved. No! it is impossible! He possesses an understanding far superior to

to such injustice. Let me rather suppose that, notwithstanding the reports your ladyship has heard in his disfavour, that he may be a man of some principle, and that, struck with the impiety of the act in which he was going to engage, he was at that moment absorbed in thought, reflecting, that in a few succeeding ones, he might have the crime of murder to answer for, or be himself launched into eternity in the midst of his transgressions.

Lady Wilson supported all the confusion and hurry with wonderful composure. Ned Beville was *himself* upon the occasion; it is not possible to pay him a higher compliment, or even to find a character that will bear a comparison with his. You may say I am in love with *him* if you please, and if thinking him the worthiest of his sex is any proof of it, I certainly am; however, I'll leave time to settle this important point, and proceed with my story.

After passing a restless night, and forming a thousand unsatisfactory plans to prevent the meeting I had too much reason to fear would take place in the morning, about seven I determined to request the

favour of Mr. Beville's company to breakfast. He kindly attended my summons, and told me he had promised his friend to call upon him at eight, in order to accompany him to the stranger: he assured me that his intentions were, to use every effort to settle the matter amicably. "Heaven reward you!" cried I, in an extasy, "but do you think there is any prospect of success?"—"That is a question" returned he, "which I know not how to answer; so far I think I may venture to affirm, that the man must be as great a brute when sober, as he was when drunk, if he refuses to make concessions for his last night's behaviour, which Lord Davenant will certainly insist upon, and cannot, as a man, dispense with. But for Heaven's sake, my dear Miss Clifton, don't alarm yourself thus," (seeing I trembled, and looked as pale as death,) "I know not the man who would not give worlds to exchange situations with Lord Davenant, to be so highly distinguished with your attention."—"Surely, Sir," replied I, "you cannot think me so totally void of humanity, as to
" be

“be in any degree accessory to endanger-
“ing any person’s life, and remain un-
“concerned.” I was vexed at the insinuation: but suppose he thought flattery a never-failing cordial for a lady’s spirits. He left me at the appointed hour, and I never experienced more anxiety and apprehension than from that time till his return, accompanied with Lord Davenant, who relieved my anxiety, by informing me the formidable hero was decamped.— He set off for Plymouth at four, with an intention of setting sail for America, at least, such was the inn-keeper’s intelligence. “Well,” said his Lordship, “I honestly
“confess I can support my disappointment like a christian, and resign the
“pleasure of his chastisement into the
“hands of General Washington, without
“reluctance.” When I found matters thus peaceably concluded, I reviewed the absurdity of my own conduct with the utmost vexation. Cards poured in from every quarter, to enquire after my health; in short, I soon found I had made myself compleatly ridiculous; yet how could it
it

it possibly be avoided? Was I to be unfortunately again in the same situation, I should act with the same folly; for I (like all great bullies) am an arrant coward; my spirits are great when they meet with no opposition, but are sure to forsake me the moment their support becomes necessary. The two gentlemen rattled away about an hour, then left me with the charming Parker, who made me a friendly visit. I flatter myself I hold no mean place in her affections; by the bye, I fear all is not right there; I am afraid the little tyrant Love has seized upon her gentle unsuspecting heart: I observed, whenever Mr. Beville spoke, though his words were of the most indifferent kind, she blushed---and not only blushed, but hesitated when she answered him: I wish my conjecture may be erroneous, as I see no prospect of the attachment becoming mutual: but time works great revolutions, and certainly will not suffer him to remain insensible of the numerous perfections of my amiable friend.

Adieu, I am sorry to say, you profit
little

little by the promise with which I concluded my last : excuse me this time, and believe me your sincere and affectionate

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER XVII.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FRANCIS FITZHENRY.

MY mind is in a different situation from what it was when I wrote last ; I am now blessed with a shadow of hope, and I pray more fervently than ever I prayed in my life, that it may not prove delusive : it is the first even my vanity (and you know I have a competent share) ever flattered me with ; but I have now better testimony, as the whole town is of my opinion. This grand discovery happened in the playhouse, where I was within an ace of being drawn into a duel ; I hope you are sufficiently acquainted with me, to know that no small provocation could induce me to engage in one ; but no man's temper is proof against scurrilous language—but to the point in question : when the dispute grew warm, and my furious antagonist

gonist drew his sword, the gentle Fanny fainted; the sight of my charmer in such a situation made me in reality (what a few minutes before, the fellow had unjustly called me) a coward: however, I appointed a time for meeting him in the morning, and assisted Ned Beville (whom this uproar had brought to us) in conveying the beautiful Fanny to a coach. Nothing could equal the misery I endured, while she remained in this shocking state of insensibility: at last, starting and looking wildly around her, she cried, "for God's sake forbear, part them—part them, good people;" then recollecting herself a little, she said, "where am I? where is Lord Davenant? is that frightful man gone." Till that moment my arm supported her, from which, immediately upon her recovery, she withdrew. I said every thing I durst to calm her apprehensions, for a consciousness of what would probably ensue, was a restraint I could not overcome, for I durst not risque a breach of veracity to one so penetrating: however, I thought I had succeeded admirably; her mind seemed to have regained a perfect

a perfect state of serenity and composure, and every fear subsided. Could you believe this ease was counterfeited; that it was the work of artifice? it was, upon my honour—it was all an imposition! can I then be blamed for following so good an example? After having, by her own confession, spent a restless night, she sent for Ned Beville, and desired him to exert himself in settling the dispute. If the poor fellow had one grain of malice in his disposition, he would have wished my throat cut for being the object of her anxiety; for that he loves Miss Clifton, is a truth too evident to be doubted—though not as well as I do, because it is not in his nature to love like me, but he loves her as well as he will ever love a woman. I am not sure that I am so blessed as to be possessed of her affections, nor had I reason to hope so, till the other night; but I am convinced her heart has not resigned its freedom to any other person. I shall continue to conduct myself as usual, that is, being civil to all, but more tender and attentive in my behaviour towards her, till my assiduity has rendered me necessary
to

to her happiness, and then!——but I shall not disclose to you any of my subsequent intentions.

* You feel more real concern for the violent attack the gout has made upon your father's stomach, than any young heir in the kingdom would, upon the death of the best of parents. You say, it is dreadful to see him upon the brink of the grave, in his present frame of mind: it certainly is, though I am afraid, it is a bold venture to trust to a death-bed repentance, for I have but a poor opinion of faith without works:—between ourselves I fear a friend of your's and mine, ought sometimes to cast a thought that way—it might even now have been too late, if the obliging sailor, my antagonist that was to have been, had not politely taken a French leave, and set off for Plymouth, instead of lodging a bullet in the thorax of your friend,

DAVENANT.

* Mr. Fitzhenry's last letter does not appear.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

I Can, with pleasure, inform you that the amiable, though unfortunate Miss Mostyn, makes daily encroachments upon the esteem of your Louisa; the Countess likewise thinks her company a most valuable acquisition: at present she labours under a cruel depression of spirits, which time alone can overcome: I wrote by her request to her father; but have not received an answer, nor can I yet expect one.

Are you very busy? or very idle? or what is the cause of your unusual silence? but I will not be premature in my upbraidings; perhaps the fault may be in the post, as I have more than once experienced its irregularity.

My time hangs rather heavy upon my hand; my mother having little communication with the neighbouring gentry; and though I have a great variety of employments, such as reading, music, drawing, &c. I confess I often wish for a more enlarged

larged society, but the thought of leaving my mother alone, a prey to melancholy reflections, is a constant check upon my wishes: her spirits, which have so long and so wonderfully supported her, I fear begin to desert her. I have several times caught her in tears, which constantly vanish at my approach, and she affects a cheerfulness, which I too plainly perceive, is contrary to her feelings. You are not, perhaps, perfectly acquainted with her unhappiness.

Immediately after the sudden death of the late Countess of Belmont, which happened about three years after my father's marriage, he requested, or rather commanded my mother to receive into her family a young girl about fifteen years of age, who was a distant relation of the family and had been educated through the bounty of the Lady Dowager; for some time she rejoiced in her society, as she was lively, and apparently good humoured; but alas! too soon the mask was thrown aside, and the real motives of my father's friendship became obvious; her good humour and civility were transformed into the

the most insufferable impertinence: my mother was no longer mistress of her own house, but for six years was obliged, with all her superior understanding and excellencies, to submit to the galling yoke of Miss Clermont's insolence; at the end of which they quitted England, and still remain abroad.

It is not from my mother that I have received this intelligence, she on the contrary, avoids any subject that can possibly betray my father's perfidy, but my own curiosity, excited by numberless circumstances, and the communicative disposition of the servants, have long since made me acquainted with what I have now related.—From my residence at Queen's-square, my mother thinks me ignorant of the real cause of my father's absence, and I cautiously avoid giving her any cause to suspect she is deceived; by confessing one part of her grief, she thinks more effectually to conceal the other: she acknowledges even to me, that my father's alienating himself from his family, is a cruelty which she most feelingly deploras, and the cause of her seclusion from the world.

world. This account, I believe, is more circumstantial than any I ever before gave you: if it is a repetition, excuse an error of memory, besides which, an observation I have luckily made upon the encreasing dejection of my mother's spirits, so entirely engrossed my mind with this melancholly subject, that it is with the utmost difficulty I can attend to any other.

I have this moment received your letter; I was terribly frightened till the drunken failor *sheered off*; and when the danger was over, could not help smiling at the alarm he had occasioned amongst you.

I suppose my good friend, you made more discoveries than one, unless you are better acquainted with the fair Parker's heart than your own. Must I accuse you of dissimulation, Fanny? or must I suppose you draw a veil over your own eyes, as you vainly endeavour to do over mine? If the latter is the case, let me entreat you carefully to examine every sentiment of your heart, for believe me, it is in a dangerous situation: it is constantly exposed to the encroachments of an enemy, who attacks you in disguise. As to his pre-
tended

tended indifference, it is all artifice; call your senses to your aid, and consider the improbability of a young man of fashion burying himself in a place so remote as E——, from those scenes of gaiety to which he was initiated even in infancy. I am not surprized that this circumstance has escaped your observation: you are intoxicated with the happiness you enjoy in his conversation; with general admiration, and various amusements: whilst I, who am not so engaged, have more leisure for reflection.

I fear your time is so engrossed that you have forgotten the miniature you promised to send me of yourself; how I envy your excellence in that delightful art. My mother's love unites with that of your sincere friend,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

MISS FANNY CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

YOUR ladyship's last letter wrought a considerable effect upon me, it even occasioned a temporary gravity. I attended to the advice it contained, and immediately undertook the desired examination, and can with joy assure you, that I found my heart in better plight than I expected. Not in regard to the tender passion, for on that head I had no apprehensions; but upon the strictest scrutiny, I could discover no stain of a black complexion: freckles there were innumerable, they however differed from those which appear outwardly, for it was evident they might all be clearly erased by care and assiduity. The only part free from these little specks, was occupied by a warm glowing friendship, darting its rays in different directions, viz. one towards your ladyship, the other to Miss Parker, but not one scratch from the little blind deity appeared upon the whole.

Jesting

Jeſting apart, I really gave your precautions their due weight, and ſeriously conſidered the gentleman's ſituation as well as my own; as to his continuance here, it does not appear to me in the extraordinary light in which you ſeem to regard it: it is a circumſtance which, in my opinion, may ariſe from a thouſand different cauſes, and cannot at any rate, with the leaſt juſtice be attributed to me, who I ſincerely aſſure you, am not by any means particularly diſtinguiſhed by his Lordſhip's attention: and, believe me, my vanity is not of ſuch a nature as to encourage me to aſpire to a rank and fortune ſo ſuperior to my own. If you would not laugh at me, I would honeſtly declare, that the matrimonial ſtate does not appear to me in the moſt eſtimable light, nor do I think my heart in any danger of captivity. I daily experience the charms of freedom; no uneaſineſs or anxiety interrupts my repoſe; my days paſs on in a continued courſe of calm tranquillity: how much then ſhould I have to loſe! how little to acquire by the exchange! —No, believe me, it is my ardent prayer, that my heart may continue free and diſ-

VOL. I. F engaged

engaged, as at this moment, to the last of my existence.

I frankly confess, that I experience great pleasure in the company of Lord Davenant, for which there is an obvious reason, as he is undoubtedly the most agreeable man our society produces; but I hold it very possible to esteem a worthy character, and to admire an accomplished man, without being enamoured of his perfections—if not, the Lord help me! for in that case, the poor damsel might betake herself to some friendly willow, whose drooping branches gently skim the surface of the murmuring brook, and the chrystal stream be augmented by the tears of the love-lorn maiden. I really begin to fear the old mansion, with its ivy-covered walls, has infected you with these romantic ideas, and shall expect soon to hear of some prince in disguise, sighing forth his passion in the most melting strains, by the light of the moon, under your window.

Alas! what an affecting instance of suffering virtue and heavenly resignation is your amiable mother. I sympathize in her
afflictions

afflictions with a filial warmth—may the cloud which obscures her happiness soon be removed, and may she enjoy in future comfort, an ample recompence for past misery.

We are to have *une petite comedie* performed at Lady Wilson's: Mrs. Cowley's Belle's Stratagem is fixed upon for the purpose. Her ladyship undertakes the part of Mrs. Racket: Miss Beville, in that of Miss Ogle, will be quite in character; as will be also the pretty Miss Parker, when she appears as Lady Frances Touchwood. Mr. Osgood, a gentleman I have never yet mentioned, (a very worthy man notwithstanding) is to perform the character of Sir George. The noble minded Saville will be properly represented by Mr. Beville. There is an old humourist who is exactly suited to the character of Old Hardy, but he is so whimsical, there is no depending upon him, though he promises fair at present. Lord D——, I expect, will shine in the hero Doricourt, but how dreadfully will the spirited character of Letitia Hardy be disgraced by the performance of your Fanny, to

F 2

whom

whom my kind and partial friends have allotted it. The parts of Villars and Flatter, are not yet disposed of.

The play is to be shortened as much as possible, that many of the under characters may be dispensed with. Our audience is only to consist of a few friends, which is one of the conditions on which I consented to become a comedian:—joyfully consented, I acknowledge; for you know I was always passionately fond of dramatic performances.

Do not mention this little frolick to the Countess, if you think it will not meet with her approbation, for though in all things I am determined, her advice (whenver she will honour me so far as to grant it) shall govern my actions, yet in this one point (so much is my heart engaged in the childish scheme) I should submit to her superior judgement with infinite reluctance.

I shall not write again till the opening of our theatre, which may perhaps afford more entertaining subjects than generally flow from the quill of your

FANNY CLIFTON.

I broke

I broke open the seal to inform you, that I have received an honourable declaration of love from the worthy Mr. Beville; an event so unexpected, and so unprecedented to your simple friend, surprized and threw me into such a state of confusion, that it was some time before I could return a proper answer. Fearing, however, that my silence might be misconstrued, I hastened to assure him, that it was impossible to entertain a higher sense of gratitude for the honour he conferred upon me, than what I at that moment felt.

"Candour and ingenuoufness, Sir," said I,

"are the only returns within my power

"to make.—My esteem, respect, and sin-

"cerest friendship are your own: as to

"love, it is a passion to which I am at

"present a stranger."—"May I not then,

"my angelic Miss Clifton, hope by un-

"remitting assiduities, to inspire your

"gentle breast with sentiments, which it

"shall be the constant study of my life to

"deserve."—"Be not offended," said I,

"when I assure you, that it is a task which

"your utmost endeavours will be unable

"to perform—was I not perfectly con-

“vinced of my own security, I should
“shun your company—cautiously avoid
“you as an enemy to my peace, for I
“look upon love as a passion inevitably
“destructive of human happiness: I
“know it is an invariable maxim with
“your sex to suppose, that a woman
“never speaks her sentiments on these
“occasions; but do not, by adhering to
“such illiberal tenets, encourage your
“unfortunately misplaced attachment,
“which I sincerely assure you can never
“be returned—when I stedfastly believe,
“the world cannot afford another in-
“stance, in which your partiality would
“not meet with that reciprocal warmth,
“which is due to your superior merit.”—
“Spare me, for Heaven’s sake, my dear
“Miss Clifton! kill me at once, with dis-
“dain, but cease to persecute me with
“this cruel kindness. How can you
“thus, by every word you utter, feed that
“flame you would persuade me to subdue.
“To overcome a passion so engrafted on
“my mind, would be a fruitless effort,—
“but to sacrifice my peace to your com-
“mands, will be a task worthy of my
“love,

“ love. Fear not that you shall hence-
“ forth be incommoded or insulted by
“ importunities, from which your candour
“ ought to exempt you. I shall ever re-
“ member your ingenuoufness with a gra-
“ titude, which I can only testify by
“ the most sincere and earnest wishes, that
“ you may enjoy that felicity with some
“ more fortunate man, which to have
“ had the power of bestowing upon you,
“ I should have regarded as the greatest
“ blessing Heaven could grant.”

As he finished the last sentence, holding my hand in his, with his eyes fixed upon my face, who should make his appearance but Lord Davenant, with a new song he had promised to procure for me; never did confusion equal mine at that moment. Mr. Beville looked chagrined and dejected, and even his Lordship caught the infection of our stupidity. The former soon departed, and left me to the *supreme* delight of a quarter of an hour's *tête à tête* with the latter; an enjoyment which, *entre nous*, I would gladly have relinquished, had not the soothing power of music most opportunely relieved my embarrassment.

My good aunt seldom favours me with her company, and when she does resign the servants conversation for mine, it is such a force upon her inclinations, that the sacrifice is too great to solicit.

It is your suggestions certainly which have given rise to the chimera, but I really fancied I perceived something particular in the behaviour of Lord Davenant, though he was uncommonly reserved; but why should I mention to you an idea, which is the offspring of my own caprice and vanity, when I am sensible that it will afford great encouragement to your suspicions? I am absolutely as much afraid of your ladyship as of the busy Mrs. Rumour; for, in the first place, I am more interested in your good opinion, and in the second, you seem equally prone to frame conjectures and build conclusions on the slightest foundations; so that henceforth I shall consider myself compelled to write with caution, to prevent misconstructions. How can you thus impose reserve on a mind, to which friendship and candour are naturally allied?

I have scarcely left myself time to dress
before

before dinner : a large party is to spend the evening with Lady Wilson, of which I am to make one.

You will receive the miniature you desired by the next coach, with a little embroidered work-bag, to prove that all my time is not spent in dissipation.

LETTER XX.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

FROM your silence, I conclude your father's complaint gains ground. Vice itself cannot help esteeming virtue, and I must ever admire and reverence your unexampled behaviour to him. That a man should return kindness with gratitude, is nothing more than what we may expect from every domestic animal we possess—but a man, who to cruelty can return tenderness and affection, deserves to be canonized.

Upon my soul, Frank, it is a mystery to me, how we ever became friends : fire and water are not more opposite, yet I believe we are essential to each other, you

to restrain the overflowings of my spirit, and I to give life to your's; without which assistance, your merit would have no more effect than a candle in a dark lanthorn.

I have encountered an alarm lately, which makes me shudder even in the repetition; yet thanks to the kind planet which presided at my birth, though it threatened death and destruction to my hopes, it has in the end revived and animated them. Conceive my mortification, upon discovering the mistress of my heart engaged in the most lover-like conversation with that sly devil Ned Beville. The gentleman—oh! how I could have cursed him! held one of those dear hands, of which I would give worlds to venture the most gentle pressure; and his basilisk eyes fixed upon her, in such a manner, as had mine gazed, I must have lost them: but you *reputed* modest fellows may do any thing, whilst we *real* ones are scare-crows to the women. This pretty scene was presented to my view by a friendly glass door, before the tender couple were sensible of my approach. When it was thrown open, and I entered the room, they started from

their seats, as if they had seen an apparition. The lady's face was covered with crimson, her companion looked as if he wished the intruder at the devil, and your humble servant like a fool. I never in my life felt myself so embarrassed, or, I may add unhappy, as at that moment, in which I imagined I beheld an invincible obstacle to all future felicity: scarcely a doubt remained of their engagement, and every revolving sun more firmly convinces me, that life will be a miserable void, unless possessed with my Fanny. Unwilling, however, to indulge my rival in a second edition of raptures, I was determined he should quit the field first. When he rose to depart, he asked me if I was inclined to walk, and tried every effort to haul me away, but I obstinately kept my ground. He had been indulged with a private audience, and why might not I make an attempt to enjoy the same privilege? However, a quarter of an hour was only granted, so covetous is the little prude of her favours, that after having bewitched me with such harmony as never flowed from the lyre of Orpheus, she pleaded the duties

of the toilet, dropped a curtsy and wished me a good morning. I endeavoured to comfort myself with the reflection, "that all's for the best,"—had I staid longer, or my attention been unemployed, so great was my agitation I should undoubtedly have betrayed myself, which would have ruined all my schemes at once.

We all met in the evening at Lady Wilson's, and I had the satisfaction to observe, that the countenance of my rival wore more the appearance of despair than joy: he seldom spoke to Miss Clifton; when he did, it was not in the style of a favoured lover, though he was always answered with a complacent smile, which set that ready dame envy, to work in my breast with a vengeance.

The next morning I called upon my *friend* (though at that moment I scarcely could have termed him so) to take a ride, which he declined, I seized the opportunity to rally him upon the interview I had interrupted, and hinted that I supposed he was impatient to retrieve what he had lost by my ill-timed appearance.

This produced an eclairsissement, which
banished

banished all my fears, and gave birth to a new train of hopes. He acknowledged that the scene I was accidentally a witness to, was owing to a declaration of his affection for the divine Miss Clifton,—“but
“alas!” said the woe-begone mortal,—
“my proposals were rejected—but in such
“a manner! so like herself! with so much
“grace! dignity! firmness! mingled with
“a cruel kindness!—In short, every word
“was such a type of her destructive per-
“fections, that whilst they destroyed my
“hopes, they increased my passion.”—

Thus did he whine for an hour, while my whole soul was intoxicated with delight; but I had prudence enough to restrain my rapture, and even to conceal it under a mask of concern for the poor devil’s sufferings. What a phlegmatic puppy!—What a pusillanimous wretch it is! heaven and earth! rejected by Miss Clifton, and continue to breath! is there such a thing in nature?

The dear charmer confessed she could never feel a tenderer sentiment for *him* than friendship; and that nothing but love,
even

even in a romantic degree, should induce her to change her situation.

Oh! Frank, is it possible such an angel can remain long uninfluenced by the tender passion? if she is at present, which I think admits of a doubt, somebody has taught her little heart to distinguish between love and friendship—and may not—but I will not give my vanity the reins.

My vigilance and watchfulness over the temper and conduct of one in whom I hope sometime to acquire a considerable interest, has informed me of a circumstance upon which I build my dependance—a circumstance which I guess comes not within the scope of your comprehension: it is no other than that she evidently possesses an higher opinion of my rival than of myself. Whilst she constantly behaves towards him with respect and deference, she treats me with an easy freedom, and even playfulness:—a playfulness, which let me add, can never betray her into a single impropriety, but such as at her age is an ornament, and displays a natural good humoured disposition, unobscured by modern education,
by

by which our young ladies are taught to speak and look by rule. No, whilst art has exhausted its whole store of advantages on my Fanny, it has not deprived her of one native grace. She is the emblem of innocence, and whilst she sees the semblance of it in others, has no suspicions—but the least encroachment puts her upon her guard. I once attempted to press her hand—with a deep blush it was instantly withdrawn, and a look of resentment was the rebuke I received for this trifling offence, which I have never ventured to repeat. No, her ladyship shall find, that when I next presume, my attempt will not be so slight, neither shall it be so easily repulsed.

We have a young coxcomb here, who has made one in Miss Clifton's train, merely because it was the *ton*; but from some imprudence, he has forfeited his share of that easy civility with which she favours all.—Towards him she conducts herself with a visible reserve, and keeps him at a distance *malgré son hardiesse*.

Experience has convinced me there is no greater enemy to love than reverence ;
it

it carries with it an idea of superiority which will not suffer the tender passion to exist—I durst venture any wager, that if you ask Fanny's reason which it prefers, Ned Beville is the man; but on the contrary, apply to her heart for its decision, (which is the only arbitress I will ever own) and take my word, you will find it a pretty warm advocate on my side of the question.

We are to perform the Belles Stratagem-fool; Fanny is to be Letitia Hardy, and your humble servant Doricourt—no characters could have been better disposed: in mine I shall nearly speak my own sentiments, and if the lady has any in my favour, she will find it difficult to conceal them.—Oh! this play is a delightful scheme, if you knew all.

Praythee write soon, I love to hear from you, and to write to you; your concerns affect me as if they were my own; and what are really so, I am obliged to impart to you, though I am scolded for my pains.

DAVENANT.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

SINCE our infant hearts were first united in the silken bonds of friendship, never before have I experienced the punishment of your displeasure.—Cruel Fanny ! to regard in so heinous a light, what was merely meant as a gentle caution.—Presumptuous, indeed, to suppose any dictates from my inferior understanding could give light to yours, which shines with such unrivaled lustre :—Indeed I did not mean to be impertinent ; but if our inmost thoughts may not be entrusted to each other, if we cannot

“ Unlock the secret casket of the heart,

“ And ev’ry pleasure, ev’ry grief impart.”

Where will be that tender friendship, that sympathy of souls we have mutually prized, and I have, perhaps, only in imagination enjoyed ?

If our correspondence, instead of the
ingenuouſness

ingenuouſneſs which has hitherto reigned in it, muſt be clogged by a mean reſerve, or tranſmit to each other's breaſt, ſentiments which never exiſted in our own, where will be its value?

My dear Fanny, that delightful vivacity, which is productive of numberleſs charms, makes you regardleſs of thoſe little minutiae which ſting me to the ſoul. My ſpirits were never violent, though I am moderately chearful—my feelings are acute, and particularly in this one point: your friendſhip I have regarded as my greateſt treaſure, and watched its growth with a miſerly care, flattering myſelf it was an accumulating fund, of which, whiſt I had life, I ſhould never know an end of the increaſe; but I will quit this ſubject, which may poſſibly only add to my offence.

Kitty Moſtyn's father is arrived—ſuch a meeting!—I deſpair of doing juſtice to the ſcene!—The venerable old man, whoſe countenance diſcovered more of the ravages of ſorrow than of time, could ſcarcely ſupport it—nor knew he how to meet his long loſt daughter.—Could he fly with

with open arms to receive her, stained with dishonour? She who had planted daggers in his parental breast? or could he reject the tears of his returning penitent?—The one was to encourage vice, and the tender influence of nature forbade the other.

Overwhelmed with these conflicting emotions, he sat in my dressing-room pouring forth his anguish—when his daughter rushed into his presence; but subdued by a consciousness of her past offences, fell lifeless at his feet.

The poor old man, with feeble efforts, attempted to support his sinking child: struggling between the tumults of joy and grief, till the contending passions forced a vent, and a flood of tears issued from his eyes, and washed “his grief worn cheeks.” His daughter at length revived, but as she gently rose, assisted by my weak arm, and stole a look at her injured parent:—starting! suddenly with the stings of conscience, she shrunk from the glance, till with a still stronger emotion she cast herself into my arms—“Hide me! hide me! dearest lady! from that injured form—those
“looks.

“ looks of tenderness pierce me to the
“ soul.” Her poor father, unable to support himself, fell into a chair that was near him, and I seized upon that opportunity to console his unhappy child. I was much distressed, as I knew in such a situation, a servant would be a very unwelcome intruder: when their agitated feelings were in some degree composed, a most affecting reconciliation took place, and their minds were restored to a degree of tranquillity: perfect, I believe, on the one part, but chequered on the other with a recollection of having once deviated from the paths of virtue. Kitty is to remain with us, though not in the character of a servant; it would be ten thousand pities so to obscure her companionable qualifications. My mother and self have joined in appropriating to her use, a small sum, sufficient to support her above the humiliating state of dependence.

My mother does not disapprove of your theatrical scheme, she applauds your choice of a modern comedy, as in them there is nothing which can offend the most refined delicacy. Mr. Sheridan and Mrs. Cowley
have.

have the happy art of extracting the essence of humour, and clearing it of those dregs of obscenity, which make most of the productions of our ancient dramatic authors unfit for the ears of a modest woman.

Indeed Fanny, if I durst, I should chide you for rejecting such a prospect of happiness, as an alliance with the worthy Beville presents. But as I am apprehensive that merely giving my sentiments upon such a subject, may forfeit your friendship, I must learn like you, in part to suppress my feelings: though I shall still flatter myself that you will ever allow me the satisfaction of expressing that ardent love and esteem for you, which neither time or circumstance can ever eradicate.

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

O H! Fitzhenry, what a miserable wretch is your friend!—too, too late alas! I see the justice of your arguments: had I attended to them sooner, I should have escaped the horror and remorse which at this moment oppress my guilty conscience. I have murdered an angel—virtue in the form of Fanny Clifton dies by my brutal artifice.—If I can collect my distracted senses, I will endeavour to be more explicit.

You may remember, that in my last I mentioned a play which we were to perform at Lady Wilson's, and I likewise hinted, that I had more views from thence than I chose to acknowledge. It is the effect of those diabolical schemes which now drives me to despair. Fanny favoured my hopes, by being unusually animated: when she addressed the enraptured Doricourt, her brilliant eyes sparkled with delight. In short, the character of Miss
Hardy

Hardy received such additional charms from her performance, that I was convinced the passion could not be so well feigned, I therefore prepared to put my plan in execution, took care to arrive at E—— before the rest of the party, and by the help of a bribe, was that night placed in a closet adjoining to her apartment, where I impatiently waited the arrival of my charmer. In about a quarter of an hour, her nimble foot tripping lightly up the stairs, informed me of her approach; she entered the room singing.—“Never till now I felt love’s smart,”—the unsuspecting innocence of her appearance, struck me with a sensation which made me repent of my rashness: that artless simplicity, accompanied with a virtuous rectitude, which displayed itself in her whole deportment, I was plotting to destroy: even of those charms for which I chiefly loved her, I was scheming to deprive her. At that moment I felt myself a villain!—but it was too late to retreat—the devil had too securely entangled me. The unsuspecting angel seated herself at her toilet, and released her auburn tresses
from

from their sable fetters: no fears obtruded themselves on her tranquil breast, whilst, I with one admiring eye placed at a crevice, trembling stood, with every faculty absorbed in rapture. Such was my situation, when suddenly starting up, she snatched the candle, and hastily opened the closet door in which I was concealed. Her surprize, though great, as you may imagine, did not deprive her of a presence of mind which few possess: instead of fainting or screaming, with an amazing agility she flew to the bell. I followed, and endeavoured to seize her in my arms, but she eluded my efforts, by springing to the door, which she threw open, and at that moment her aunt, accompanied by one maid-servant appeared: the former she addressed in the following terms. “ You
“ find me, madam, in a most humiliat-
“ ing situation, in which I hope my con-
“ duct has not involved me; and that I
“ shall be able to convince you, that it is
“ not any imprudence of mine which has
“ subjected me to the villanous snare from
“ which you have so happily preserved me.”
The good woman stared first at one and then

then at another, and exhibited a most striking picture of amazement and stupidity.—I attempted to speak, but was checked as follows :

“ Your actions, my Lord,” continued Miss Clifton, “ are sufficiently clear, they
“ want no illustration ; but as my conduct
“ has not been quite so conspicuous, your
“ answering some questions which I shall
“ propose to you, with truth, if you are
“ posselt of such a virtue, is what I have
“ a right to demand, as a small reparation
“ for the affront you have offered me ;
“ but before I proceed, the rest of the
“ family must be present ;” and immediately the man servant with the other woman (my accomplice) received a summons ; on the countenance of the latter (which I dare say was no more than a type of my own) guilt was evidently marked :—every one was embarrassed but our fair judge : whose every feature remained calm and placid, except when her eyes were directed towards the wretch who so highly merited her displeasure : she then assumed an air of dignity and resentment, which on such an occasion, added to her charms.

When they were all assembled, she thus began her charge.—“ Now, my Lord, be
“ so good as to recollect, whether in the
“ course of our acquaintance, you have
“ ever observed any glaring indiscretions
“ or forwardness in my behaviour, either
“ towards yourself, or any other person,
“ which might encourage improper liberties from your sex? Speak freely, my
“ lord, youth is subject to errors: I expect no compliments; flattery from
“ you at present, would only encrease
“ that despicable light in which I must
“ henceforward behold you; besides, what
“ you now say, I shall call upon you to
“ ratify in the most solemn terms; a woman’s reputation is not to be trifled
“ with.”

I declared without disguise, my opinion of the uniform propriety of her behaviour. I durst not attempt a single flourish, for fear of being accused of deceit.

“ What part of my conduct then,” resumed she, “ has encouraged you to offer me the indignity which I have this
“ night sustained?”

Not daring to advance a falsehood, I
frankly

frankly owned: "with shame," I said, "I
" owned, that I had led a dissipated life,
" and that from too much experience of
" the weakness of one part of her sex,
" though thoroughly convinced of her in-
" finite superiority in every other respect,
" I had not been able to divest myself of
" an idea, that the whole sex was equally
" frail."—"Now, my lord," said she,
without suffering me to say a word to
palliate the crime which I had so candidly
confessed, "I must call upon you to at-
" test what you have asserted, not only
" regarding yourself, as answering to our
" finite understandings, but to an infinite
" being, who is the guardian of inno-
" cence, and who cannot be deceived."
When I had obeyed her injunctions in the
most solemn manner, I again attempted to
mollify my offences, but was again inter-
rupted.—"Your character, my lord,"
said the fair inexorable, "is a subject so
" totally uninteresting to me, that I am
" sorry you attempt to give yourself the
" trouble of a vindication; nor do I wish
" to impeach it, farther than the justifica-
" tion of my own requires. You, ma-
G 2 "dam,"

“dam,” addressing herself to her aunt, “are, I hope, convinced of my innocence, and that it is not any imprudence of mine which has subjected me to the insult I have received.”—Her aunt eagerly assured her, that she was too well acquainted with her worth, to doubt the propriety of her conduct.—“I have but one question more to propose,” resumed Miss Clifton, “and that is, to enquire which of these people was your accomplice in the villanous scheme?”

Seeing I hesitated, she continued, “I insist upon an answer, my lord, otherwise the innocent must suffer with the guilty.” At that moment the conscious wretch saved me from a breach of promise, by casting herself at the feet of her mistress, whose tender bosom would have inclined to lenity and compassion, had not the indulgence of such passions been incompatible with her prudence:—the crime was of such a nature, as to render mercy culpable, so that the two culprits were reduced to a disgraceful retreat. At that instant, I should have been glad to have exchanged places with the partner in my

my misfortune, to have escaped that weight of resentment, which no plea on my part could mitigate; and to have been entitled to that generous pity, though mingled with anger, which her ignorance excited.

As the door at the same moment closed on the peer and the mop-squeezer, I enjoyed for some part of my road home, an agreeable serenade from her voice, to which my faculties, as you may imagine, were well tuned. “Pray your honour—
“for the love of Heaven, your honour,
“consider that if it had na bin for sarving
“your honour, I should nare a bin turned
“out in this disgraceless manner, and at
“this time a night, from the best place
“in all this world. I’m sure I may walk
“many a dree mile afore I find such another:
“for young madam is the best
“creatur that ever was born, that’s
“what she is: I was fartinly bewitched,
“when I listened to Ralph your worship’s man,
“but he told me I was only standing in my own leet.”—“Here,
“here,” said I, “cease your d—d blub-
“bering, and take this,” throwing her

some loose silver, at the same time I with difficulty forbore spurning her with my foot. Can you wonder at my frenzy? Surely at that instant I suffered a punishment adequate to my offences. Yet, oh ye gods! what was there still in reserve! distraction seizes me at the thought. During the night my mind was affected with a variety of emotions; and upon the whole, I believe the agreeable were predominant: for, independant of a transient mortification, I felt more genuine delight in finding my charmer possessed a virtue, which I had hitherto thought only existed in imagination, than I could from the gratification of my unwarrantable desires; for in that case the respect, esteem, and even reverence, with which I now regard her, would have been destroyed, and my feelings reduced to a mere sensual passion. By her conduct, all my objections to matrimony were removed: I saw an opportunity of obliging my father, and of securing my own felicity, (for I cannot doubt that her heart prefers me) and I concluded the offer of my hand and fortune, supported by a title and coronet, would amply com-

compensate for the crime I had been guilty of.

Delighted with the flattering prospects painted on my imagination, I flew to the door from which a few hours before I had been disgracefully dismissed. Judge of my horror and distress, when I was informed that Miss Clifton had passed the night in a strong delirium; and that her fever was then so high, that the physician despaired of her recovery—experience can alone inform us what the human mind is capable of supporting—could I once have thought my senses could have survived the shock they then sustained. All the family was in an uproar; the footman, when he had abruptly answered me, darted past me, and returned (whilst I remained in the same place unable to move) with the doctor, whom he importuned every step to make haste, crying, “my young lady is dying, “and if she does die, she will not leave “her fellow in the world.” Rouzed from my lethargy by this dreadful exhortation.—“For Heaven’s sake, Sir,” said I, as he passed me, “exert your skill—save the “life of your patient, and you may com-

“mand my fortune,” at the same time putting ten guineas into his hand, which he refused rather disdainfully saying, “Do not think, Sir, that I want any such inducement to fulfil the duties of my profession. My utmost efforts, I assure you, will be exerted in the service of Miss Clifton, and Heaven grant they may prove effectual:” He then left me in all the agonies of despair, in which I remained walking to and fro before the door till his return, which afforded no relief to my misery, as he declared every symptom was as unfavourable as it could be, and that he apprehended the event must prove fatal. This information bereft me of power to reply, and I believe the good old man thought me little better than the angel he had quitted: he led, or rather dragged me into his own house, which is only a few paces distant, where he set me in a chair and bled me. When reason and the power of utterance returned, I poured forth the anguish of my soul without reserve: not even concealing from my worthy benefactor (for so I had reason to call him) how villanously instrumental

mental I had myself been to the illness of Miss Clifton. I confessed to him all my past and present intentions; the latter he applauded, as much as he condemned the former, and fervently prayed that my repentance might not be too late: he has promised to call upon me after every visit to his patient; besides which method of intelligence, I have placed a sentinel at the door, who is to enquire of every one who passes through it, and to send me dispatches accordingly: hitherto every account I have received, has added torment to my agitated soul. Heaven grant there may be some comfort in store for me, or distraction must ensue. To lose my Fanny, must at all events be to lose all that makes life valuable, but to be myself her murderer—what horror is in the thought!

I wonder I don't hear from Ned Beville; I expected he would have been so kind as to have cut my throat before this time: it would have been a work of ease, as nothing could have tempted me to draw my sword in so vile a cause. I cannot devise the reason of his present inactivity, when I recall to mind the numberless in-

contestible proofs of his courage, to which I have been witness.

I wish you could come to me: your company might be some solace to my woes, and mitigate the pangs I endure: even this last comfort I cannot hope to enjoy, as your father's funeral can be scarcely over, and you will of course be engaged with your brother and sister.

Adieu! may you never experience the anguish that now rends the guilty soul of
of your

DAVENANT.

LETTER XXIII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

GOOD heavens Fanny! what means this cruel, this unusual silence? have I, by regretting the offence inadvertently committed, increased it? or is it that, fatigued with the insipidity of my correspondence, or with the troublesome officiousness of my friendship, you have availed yourself of the trifling difference in our
opinions

opinions, to be released from an irksome and unpleasant tye, no longer rendered agreeable by that fond affection that closed the knot, and united our hearts with the tender cement of esteem and love? If my fears have a foundation, pray acknowledge their truth: it is not your correspondence, your acquaintance, or mere professions of friendship, that can compensate for the interest I once possessed in your heart; therefore, as I am far from wishing you to put a force upon your inclinations, scruple not to own that other engagements, more new, and more pleasing, occupy your mind, and leave not one corner for the residence of an old worn out attachment: freely confess that the gentle Parker, with sentiment and understanding more consonant to your own, now supplies the place of the late less worthy possessor.

I may secretly lament, that your steadiness is not equal to your other perfections; but that alone can never deprive you of my love: by the loss of yours, I feel I shall suffer many pangs, but they will be totally unmingled with resentment.

My mother flatters me that it is the

amusements in which you are engaged, that employ your time, and that I have no cause to doubt the affections of my Fanny. May she be as right in her present conjectures, as she is in every action of her life, and happiness may still smile on your devoted friend,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XXIV.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

STILL in the wretched state you left it, continues the miserable trunk of your friend Davenant; for too truly, alas! I fear I may say, the life is lost, for the life was Fanny Clifton; and she—oh Heavens! every moment approaches nearer that goal, where she will receive the reward of unparalleled piety and virtue—But what remains for me? what ought to remain for the murder of such innocence? torture unheard of! such as is far beyond the power of human laws to inflict—and such he will endure: for pangs hitherto

therto unfelt and unknown will be his portion. What is suffering an ignominious death by the hand of the executioner, when compared to what I now feel, and what the future promises?

Oh my Fanny! my Fanny! my beautiful, virtuous Fanny, leave not thy proselyte, unknowing even the reformation thou hast wrought. Oh Fitzhenry! should she recover—ecstatic thought! but I dare not indulge myself with the delusive phantom! every action of my devoted life should tend to render me worthy of her love, and her esteem: her will should regulate and form mine, and her every wish be obeyed ere it was expressed. Then might I not hope for a reward in her approbation?—What a dream of happiness! alas! a dream indeed! for my worthy friend Doctor R—d, who has this moment left me, shakes his head and dreads to answer my enquiries—he drives me to distraction, by exhorting me with unfeigned compassion, to prepare my mind for such a degree of resignation, as may enable me to support the event he has too much reason to expect will attend the

I crisis

crisis of her disorder. Resignation!—does he think I would survive the loss of every earthly comfort! I wonder how I have hitherto retained my senses—but I deserve not—therefore I do not enjoy the relief the deprivation of them would afford me.

I cannot sufficiently thank you for the friendly haste with which you encountered affliction. My best respects attend Mr. and Mrs. Osmond. Adieu, believe me your sincere, though miserable friend

DAVENANT.

LETTER XXV.

MISS PARKER TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

YOUR ladyship will no doubt be much surprized at the address of an entire stranger. Would to Heaven I had an excuse for my intrusion less melancholy—less repugnant to your happiness as well as my own!—for oh! madam, the universally admired, and our mutually beloved Miss Clifton, now struggles with the iron hand
of

of death. Perhaps her kind, though undeserved partiality, may have led her to mention, in the course of your correspondence, the name of Maria Parker, whose melancholy office is now to wait the progress of a violent, destructive fever, and strong delirium, with every adverse symptom preying upon the precious existence of the most valuable of her sex, and to relate to your ladyship this tale of woe—to transmit to your breast every pang, without giving ease to my own. Since Tuesday last, has the angelic sufferer lain in her present situation, occasioned by a shock the most dreadful, by behaviour the most inhuman—I am called to the sick-room, but the first moment I leave it shall be devoted to your ladyship.

* * * * *

Thank God the dear creature is at present more tranquil, which affords me an opportunity of pursuing the unhappy narrative. That unfortunate night I have before mentioned, we performed a play at Lady Wilson's. Miss Clifton was the heroine, and in that, as in all she undertook,

took, she excelled; though I own I attributed the uncommon spirit with which she acquitted herself, to a secret partiality for Lord Davenant, who performed the part of Doricourt, and I fear I was not mistaken; for too sure the wretch possessed a considerable interest in her heart, which he no doubt was sensible of, and unacquainted with the purity of her mind, thought to take advantage of the passion he had inspired; and by villanously bribing one of her servants, was placed in a closet adjoining her bed-chamber: but by the interposition of providence, the creaking of the door alarmed her, and she immediately opened it: her surprize happily did not deprive her of recollection, and she rang the bell violently before the monster could prevent her. She assembled the family together, and in the presence of them all, called upon him to do justice to her fame, by declaring whether it was any ill conduct of her's that had occasioned such a proceeding: he scrupled not to justify her honour in the most satisfactory manner. Our friend's behaviour was calm, composed, and wonderfully

derfully free from agitation: her words accompanied with a modest dignity, which as her aunt informed me, seemed even to penetrate into the savage heart of the base destroyer of innocence. When his absence rendered this surprizing exertion less necessary, the shock she had received attacked her spirits with double violence: mortified pride, offended virtue, and I fear disappointed love, raised such dreadful conflicts in her oppressed bosom, that she could not support their united weight, but fell into a most alarming state of insensibility, the vacant look, and languid smile of which, were more terrible even than a raging fever which succeeded, attended with a delirium, which still continues with unremitting violence. She raves much of Lord Davenant, and in such a manner as evidently discovers the situation of her heart towards that worthless nobleman: she calls frequently upon your ladyship, and always fancies she has hurt you: she starts up in bed, and cries, "take her from me—see how she bleeds—" "it was me that did it—oh that wound, that wound—see how she frowns at
" me."

“ me.” Yesterday a dawn of hope seemed to smile upon us, for after talking as above, she burst into a flood of tears, and said, “ indeed, indeed, Lady Louisa, I “ never will hurt you again, do forgive “ me now.” Her tears, as I had flattered myself, produced a delightful effect; they restored her reason, though but for a few minutes: she knew and thanked me for having the kindness to sit by her; she said she had been dreaming that she had hurt Lady Louisa Stafford, and’ that she was very happy to find it was only a dream; but alas, I had not long cause to rejoice in the return of her senses; for, upon recollecting the cruel scene which had deprived her of them, she became again delirious, and her ravings were far more violent than before.

I happened to be with Miss Clifton when she received your last letter, (that which arrived to-day excepted) she shed tears over the contents, and said, “ indeed “ Maria I am very blameable, I am “ blessed with a friend, who would almost die to secure my happiness, and “ in return, I am always afflicting her “ with

“ with an unguarded flightiness which I
“ ought to conquer ;” that letter there-
fore, I conclude, has still some hold upon
her imagination, and makes her fancy
she has injured you.

The morning after this fatal adventure,
Mr. Beville called here to be informed of
the truth of the report ; and the relation
he received from me, almost reduced him
to the state of our poor friend : the re-
sentment with which he was inflamed
against the author of her sufferings, made
me fear consequences, which could alone
increase the horror of the catastrophe we
at present deplore : I hesitated not to con-
jure him to lay aside any designs he might
have formed of revenging her injuries ;
and at length, with the utmost difficulty,
I convinced him how unnecessary, and even
prejudicial to her honour, such a proceed-
ing must be ; and that if it was the will
of Providence to restore her to her friends,
it would, I was certain, from a perfect
knowledge of Miss Clifton’s disposition,
embitter her succeeding days, which might
otherwise be enjoyed without any retro-
spection to this unfortunate transaction,
but

but what must be productive of the genuine satisfaction of self-approbation.

Happily, I extorted from him a promise, to leave the worthless peer to the punishment of his own guilty conscience, before I would suffer him to quit the house. No doubt Miss Clifton has mentioned this worthy gentleman to your ladyship; I am certain she has not a more sincere admirer: the only unaccountable part of her character is, preferring the libertine Lord Davenant, to the all accomplished and unblemished Mr. Beville: possessed of the love and esteem of such a man, sure no woman could be unhappy. He had the generosity to say, even in the midst of his anger, that in the character of Lord Davenant was united an extraordinary compound of good and bad qualities; that no man had a heart more accessible to the calls of distress, or more ready to relieve it; and that he was well convinced, no man had a stricter sense of honour, where our sex was not concerned. "Does not that," exclaimed I, "argue cowardice, when our weakness, and inability to defend ourselves, leave us alone exposed

“ posed to insults ; how much more worthy the lords of the creation, to patronize our virtues, and by setting us examples of good and noble actions, excite in us an emulation to approach, if not to equal them.” He acquiesced in my opinion, and left me, repeating his assurances, that he would be entirely governed by my commands.

I have written this long letter at short intervals. The dear soul continues much the same ; one moment we flatter ourselves with hope, the next we are all in despair.

I know not whether most to apologize for intruding so long upon your ladyship’s patience, or for not earlier informing you of our distress ; my excuse for the former is, that my own feeling painted to me your solicitude to know every circumstance of the sad story ; and for the latter, the extreme agitation of my mind deprived me of thought, or rather so directed it to one dreadful point, as to destroy all power of recollection. The post mark of your ladyship’s letter reminded me of the attention due to you, and my own heart taught

taught me to commiserate your feelings.

Good Heavens! what will become of me? the doctor has this moment declared not a ray of hope remains, and that he fears it is not in the art of man to save her.— Mercy on me! my apprehensions, though great, had not prepared me for this shock. I have sent every where for further help—no help—no skill—no consultations, or human assistance, shall be wanted, and that Heaven may grant them success, is the sincere and fervent prayer of your devoted humble servant.

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER XXVI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS PARKER.

Dear Madam,

YOUR letter has almost deprived me of my senses—I am all distraction—This scroll will scarcely reach you before I embrace the suffering angel—Oh Heavens! perhaps for the last time. That vile wretch Lord Davenant, could his callous

callous heart feel what I now endure, his punishment would not lack severity—oh! Miss Parker, you know how to pity me. Our acquaintance, indeed has not commenced under the most happy auspices, but though congenial joy refuses her alluring smiles, our hearts will be more securely bound in sympathetic sorrow (which I will flatter myself) may possibly be succeeded by the recovery of our invaluable friend, whose returning health I firmly believe, is as necessary to the felicity of Miss Parker, as to that of her much obliged friend,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XXVII.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

NO hope, no hope—I send, and send, and still those horrible monosyllables reverberate on my ear!—What are racks! what are tortures to what I now endure? could I have foreseen such consequences from my cursed plotting!—but I dreamt not of angels, nor thought that virtue would deign to inhabit this corruptible world,

world, or Heaven knows, I would not have offended her.—No, it was to the flimsy drab who prostitutes her sacred name I bore an enmity.—You indeed warned me—but I disregarded your admonitions. Henceforth you shall be my ruling star—the kind mentor, who shall guide my steps, from whose precepts I will never swerve:—but what will all avail?—bereft of my Fanny, what have I to hope?

Farewell, Fitzhenry, pity your distracted friend,

DAVENANT.

LETTER XXVIII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT.

TEACH me, my ever dear and revered parent—teach me to emulate your fortitude; instruct me, like yourself, to smile at the heavy hand of affliction; for now I feel its weight, and want your maternal assistance to support myself under it.

The poor departing Fanny I shall see no more.—Oh! death! inexorable death!
will

will nought appease thee? but thou must thus untimely prey on youth, beauty and virtue in their fairest form!—Could'st thou not, insatiate as thou art, spare to the world one pattern of perfection?—Oh! madam, can you forgive your impious child, that dares to murmur at the dispensations of Providence—my tears will blot out my complaints, and you in pity will forget them.

I have just been inhumanly dragged by the doctor's order, from the chamber of the dying faint, confessedly that I might not be a witness of her last moments.—I screamed Fanny! Fanny! I will not leave thee.—No, nothing but death shall part us—alas! she heard me not—equally insensible of her friend's suffering and her own.

Good God! she's gone! I hear the gentle Parker's trembling step—she has been a friend indeed; with a mind collected and active, though in the midst of affliction, she could assist; whilst I, weak and feeble, sunk under the weight of woe, and could yield no help but unavailing

tears.—The pen drops from my hand I can no longer support myself.

* * * * *

Heaven be praised!—she lives—the sweet Maria brought not the melancholy tidings I had so much cause to apprehend.—No! she was the happy harbinger of joy! When I was forced from the room, the doctor and herself, more tractable than your Louisa, quietly watched by her bed-side, expecting some momentary alteration:—few minutes had elapsed before they had the unspeakable, and un hoped for satisfaction of beholding her in a fine calm sleep, which continued two hours, and restored her precious senses. What a happy! happy turn! I shall assemble the family to return thanks and praises to the throne of grace, for this blessed event. The doctor chides me no less for my present uncontrollable joy, than he did before this favourable crisis, for the violence of my grief, and cruelly reminds me, that his patient still continues in a very uncertain state: a state which may probably be subject to changes, as sudden, as that which
had

had given such a reverse to my sensations—and provokingly adds, there is nothing he so much dreads as the premature appearance of my ladyship in the sick room. Mrs. Forbes is likewise in a state of banishment, to which she has submitted from a very early period of her niece's illness, the good soul, through a mistaken zeal, was near committing a *faux pas*, which not all the art of the medical tribe could have retrieved, had not the timely appearance of the doctor prevented her administering a strong potion of mulled wine, well seasoned with nutmeg and ginger. The good man, who has a considerable share of irascibility in his disposition, which he has displayed upon much less trying instances, seized the infernal poison, as he called it, threw it out of the window, and attacked the poor culprit with a volley of language which the occasion itself could scarcely justify. The lady, however, maintained her argument with great perseverance, and it was with the utmost difficulty, she was at length persuaded that she was not the best physician of the two; and Miss Parker absolutely the next day caught her in

the same fact, but was equally fortunate with the doctor, in preventing the execution of her intention: in her fright, she made use of some hasty expressions, which (Mrs. Forbes not properly understanding) gave offence; and the officious lady has since contented herself with enquiries at the chamber door. Since this *fracas*, she has entertained a violent hatred against Miss Parker, to whose attention and assiduity she owes the recovery of her niece—instead of endeavouring to conceal her groundless enmity, she suffers it to appear almost in every sentence, by some gross hint, or ill-natured sarcasm. Yesterday her malevolence arrived at such a height, that she even cast reflections upon her poverty, and abused her for those friendly services, for which she ought to adore her—addressing herself to me, in a half whisper, she said,—“fine nursing indeed—pretend
“to teach me, who have so many more
“years over my head. I wonder what
“business she has here—nobody wants
“her company, I’m sure, now, but ma-
“dam knows on which side her bread’s
“battered. Such people are never paid.”

I felt

I felt my resentment so greatly inflamed by this illiberal language, that I fear I should have been unable to have restrained it within the bounds of decency, had not the fair victim of her spleen been present.

The danger of our Fanny at that time, erased this mortifying event from my mind, but during a conversation in which I have been this moment engaged with Miss Parker, it recurred to my recollection—and I could not help expressing my astonishment at the composure with which she seemed to disregard the insolence of Mrs. Forbes. “Your ladyship has only
“to consider,” returned she, “the character of the lady, and the situation
“of her amiable niece, to cease to wonder. Of what value must be my friendship for the latter, if I could be induced
“to withdraw any poor services within
“my power to render her, from a foolish
“resentment of the mean, spleenful virulence of the former, whose education
“has scarcely taught her any other language. You have not, perhaps, been
“informed of the many disadvantages

“ under which she laboured, or compassion
“ must have been your only sentiment
“ with regard to her: it was her fate to
“ remain at home with illiterate parents,
“ who had neither power or ideas to in-
“ duce them to bestow upon her a better
“ education, than what they themselves
“ had received. Her understanding, which
“ was unhappily very moderate in it-
“ self, was left entirely uncultivated,
“ whilst her sister, (Miss Clifton’s mother)
“ on the contrary, by early gaining the
“ favour of a widow lady of eminent merit
“ and benevolence, acquired every accom-
“ plishment which from money, or a
“ bright example could be obtained.
“ This lady, whose name was Waldegrave,
“ was distantly related to the Clifton fa-
“ mily, and living near Oxford, the pre-
“ sent Earl of Carlton and his brothers
“ frequently spent part of the vacation
“ with her, whose ease and chearfulness of
“ disposition, gave her the art of diffusing
“ happiness to all around her. The young
“ men almost adored her, they visited her
“ with joy, and departed from her with
“ regret. The youngest, who was her
“ godson,

“ godson, was supposed to be her favourite,
“ notwithstanding the equanimity of her
“ behaviour. Whether he was so or not
“ at that time, he certainly soon became
“ so, from the flame with which her young
“ friend had inspired him : no wonder
“ that a mind replete with virtue and
“ noble sentiments, should find an irresist-
“ ible attraction, in its counterpart :
“ their attachment had long become mu-
“ tual, before either of them suspected it
“ had any other foundation than friend-
“ ship; but the time for their separation
“ approached, and brought with it con-
“ viction : in vain did family pride tor-
“ ture his mind, and urge him to fly from
“ the danger he had just discovered. The
“ fascinating power of love had already
“ gained such an ascendancy over his mind,
“ as to demand a sacrifice of pride, in-
“ terest, and the favour of his friends :
“ in short, hurried on by the excess of
“ his passion, as they were taking an even-
“ ing’s walk in some pleasure grounds
“ belonging to their friend, he cast him-
“ self at her feet, and in language which
“ his heart dictated, declared she was sole

“ arbiters of his fate. His fair compa-
“ nion, with sensations equally lively in
“ his favour, though more under the sub-
“ jection of reason, refused to listen to a
“ conversation, which she was sensible,
“ would never be authorized by them to
“ whom it was their duty to refer: she
“ therefore left her lover in the depth of
“ despair, and flew to her benefactress, to
“ whom, with the utmost sincerity, she
“ communicated what had passed, without
“ even endeavouring to conceal her own
“ feelings: she candidly confessed that, had
“ their situations been similar, the declara-
“ tion Mr. Clifton had made her, would en-
“ sure her felicity; notwithstanding which,
“ she voluntarily promised never more to
“ behold the man so dear to her, if Mrs.
“ Waldegrave had a wish to the contrary;
“ but that lady, so far from being dis-
“ pleased, was delighted with a prospect
“ of the reciprocal happiness these two
“ worthy young people would bestow
“ upon each other; declared she saw no
“ obstacle to their union, the young
“ gentleman being then possessed of a liv-
“ ing, the income of which was six hun-
“ dred

“dred pounds a year, besides an estate
“which produced two more, which to-
“gether with what he might expect from
“from the earl his father, and two thou-
“sand pounds promised them by their
“kind friend, would not only afford them
“a decent, but a very genteel subsistence.
“As to family pride, it was a weakness
“which she held in contempt, she re-
“garded no consideration, as sufficient to
“balance the intrinsic merit of the heart,
“and she was sensible that in that respect,
“no family could be contaminated by
“an alliance with her adopted daughter.
“She wrote to the earl for his consent,
“with the same assurance of success, as
“though the lady had been descended
“from one of the first families in the
“kingdom. This circumstance, whilst it
“is an impeachment of this worthy lady’s
“knowledge of the hearts of others,
“strikingly exemplifies the goodness of
“her own. She was soon undeceived by
“a refusal, conveyed in the most cruel
“and insulting terms: a long correspon-
“dence on the subject ensued, without
“any change of sentiment on either part:

“ this uneasy state of suspense was termi-
“ nated by the death of his lordship, but
“ not before he had effectually, by means
“ of a codicil, excluded his son from
“ every benefit within his power to de-
“ prive him. The young couple, after
“ paying that attention to his memory
“ which decency required, were married.
“ You are, no doubt, acquainted with
“ the sequel of their history from your
“ intimacy with their daughter: indeed
“ my design was not to have entered into
“ a detail of it, but merely to convince
“ you, that anger or resentment is not due
“ to the little errors of Mrs. Forbes, but
“ in speaking of her, I insensibly fell into
“ a different path, when my intention was
“ only to acquit Mrs. Forbes, and justify
“ myself for submitting to an insult:—
“ for I must intrust a secret to your lady-
“ ship, with which I wish I was not so
“ well acquainted: it is, that my heart
“ and situation do not agree, the former
“ being proud, the latter humble. I could
“ not suffer you to suppose I could sustain
“ an insult entirely unaffected and unhurt;
“ believe me, had I regarded it as such,
“ as

“ as such I should have have repented it.
“ The tenour of Mrs. Forbes’s expressions
“ was certainly cruel and illiberal, but
“ the same words or insinuations proceed-
“ ing from different people, have very dif-
“ ferent weight and signification : had
“ they been uttered by your ladyship or
“ Miss Clifton, I should have felt them
“ in their fullest force, because I should
“ have been convinced they had more than
“ a literal meaning ; on the contrary, the
“ whole of Mrs. Forbes’s severity lay in
“ her language, as I am perfectly con-
“ vinced she has no secret enmity against
“ me, but merely a little peevishness and
“ vexation, occasioned by my encroach-
“ ment upon her right of attending upon
“ her niece. It has been the misfortune
“ of Mrs. Forbes, to spend her life with
“ the ignorant and vulgar, consequently
“ their language and ideas have become
“ hers : yet, notwithstanding the disad-
“ vantages which obscure her natural qua-
“ lities ; I can discern many good pro-
“ perties, which, could they emerge from
“ that obscurity, would entitle her to re-
“ spect :—as one of them, I esteem her

“ unbounded regard for her niece, though
“ her odd and uncouth manner of shew-
“ ing it, might, without allowances,
“ even make it pass for its opposite ; yet
“ I am convinced there never existed a
“ more genuine affection. I rejoice that
“ she may now with safety return to her
“ niece’s apartment, which will effectual’y
“ put an end to our little *fracas* ; and de-
“ pend upon it, she will remember my
“ offence, no more than I shall her resent-
“ ment.”

So ended the fair orator, leaving me delighted with her understanding, and the justness of her sentiments ; but for a knowledge that there is no such thing as human perfection, I should think it existed in Miss Parker ; so sensible, so steady, possessed of strong judgement, with a manner mild and delicate, together with a very great sweetness of temper, and a diffidence of opinion, which I think essential to the softness of the female character. To be sure the poor Fanny, who will always possess the first place in my heart (and Heaven be praised for restoring her to me) is by no means inferior in point of
good

good sense, good temper, or mental endowments of any kind, to Miss Parker; and it must be confessed, greatly eclipses her in personal charms: her sparkling lively hazle eyes, arched brows, long eye-lashes, a countenance universally allowed to be the residence of the graces, with a beautiful person, though rather below the middle size; with an air of distinguished elegance, secure to her a pre-eminence in the line of beauty: nevertheless she wants the steady collected prudence of her friend Maria, instead of which she is giddy and thoughtless to an excess, and betrays herself into little errors and difficulties, which require the utmost exertion of her good sense to disengage herself from; it is a fault, however, which time has the most dominion over, and it is even such an one as, under proper restrictions, adds grace to every action.

It is past midnight, though I am still scribbling, which has employed a great part of the day, as you may perceive by the size of this packet. Sleep to me is become so great a stranger, that it had almost escaped my memory, that such a blessing

bleffing was neceffary : it is time, however, to renew our acquaintance, which I hope, as eafe is reftored to my mind, will not be attended with any difficulty.

I will keep this unfealed till the morning, that I may fend you a further account of our patient.

* * * * *

Fanny has had a delightful night, the brightened countenance of the doctor, when he defcended the ftairs, rendered an enquiry needless. I demanded the performance of his promife, to fuffer me to fee my friend, which he granted, but defired that fhe might be apprized of my intention, to prevent the ill confequences of a furprize. Maria took the office upon herfelf, and I am this moment waiting with the utmoft impatience for a fummons :—a very few hours fince, I defpaired of ever more beholding my beloved Fanny.

Was I writing to any other perfon, I fhould apologize for this heavy tax upon their patience, but am certain your kind partiality will render it unneceffary from your dutiful

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

WORTHLESS as I am, I am again blest with a prospect of happiness. Oh ! my friend, I can now have the unspeakable bliss of informing you that my Fanny lives : a happy turn in her fever has given me life, by restoring hers ; and I will henceforth use my utmost endeavours to render mine deserving of her affections ; for I am now fully convinced, that though it is possible that her heart may be caught by superficial and external qualifications, it is by kindred worth alone it can be retained ; and where she ceases to esteem, she will no longer love. That is an argument, you will say, greatly in my disfavour, but I hope there are many to counterbalance it, though I fear to canvass them. I have written to my father for his vote, and shall place great confidence on its weight : I am so far from fearing any opposition from him, that I know my petition will be a renovation to his youth : it
has

has long been his charge,—“ My son,
“ make haste and marry—never mind
“ money—marry suitable to your rank if
“ you can, but by all means marry.”—
His admonitions would have availed little,
had not a miraculous coalition of virtue,
wit and beauty, changed my sentiments,
and rendered me as zealous a devotee in
the worship of Hymen, as my worthy Sire
himself: I therefore wait his answer with
an impatience unallayed with doubt.—
Miss Clifton’s family is equal to mine;
nay, I believe, were we to apply to the
genealogical tree, we should find the
Carlton’s decked with the most distinguish-
ed plumage: but I hate family pride, and
was Fanny what she is, from whomsoever
she might be descended, I should be equal-
ly her slave. So far from deriving any
lustre from the present Earl of Carlton, he
may be happy, that there is one Scion
which still keeps the name of merit in the
family, as it might otherwise be extinct.

In the midst of my distress, who should
accost me but the two execrable wretches,
by whose means I had drawn the heavy
calamity on myself: they called out for
justice,

justice, reparation, and a performance of my promise, by rewarding their villany. Every key of discord in my feelings was agitated by this attack; I execrated them and my own folly, wondered at their impudence; threatened them with chastisement from the town beadle, and at length upon reflection, paid them their demand. When I had driven them away by my menaces, I considered what trouble they might occasion me: I knew that whilst I was punishing them, they would be exposing me; the possession of which power, no doubt was the cause of their insolence; remorse likewise stung my conscience, and whispered that I myself was the real villain; the grand engine, without which these tools could not have acted; I had also the guilt to answer for, of having trained one of them almost from infancy to the office for which I had now discharged him: these considerations, you may be sure, did not tend to harmonize my feelings; on the contrary they disordered me so much, that my pulse beat high, my head was giddy, and in short I was obliged to be bled, and put to bed: I felt myself

myself very ill, and a new thought engaged my imagination, which was that of meeting Fanny in a better place, which naturally led me to consider how little I was qualified to indulge such an hope; from this I fell into a train of reflections, which never before presented themselves to my mind, and which, though my disorder soon quitted me, and Fanny is restored to health, I am determined ever more to cherish.

In the morning I sent for my two evil geniuses.—I believe I did not inform you that Ralph was concerned, but that was needless, as you know my schemes have been seldom executed without the assistance of my prime minister: it was by means of his amour with Miss Clifton's maid, that she was prevailed upon to betray her mistress.

Would you believe, Frank, that I am become as good a preacher as yourself, and have actually delivered a long lecture to these poor wretches: I pointed out to them the evil consequences of iniquity, and enumerated the rewards of virtue; I painted in the strongest colours the punishment

ment I myself endured, for an indulgence of the former, and professed myself a proselyte to the latter. I thought it my duty to exert my utmost abilities, to extirpate those seeds of vice, which I myself had sown in their hearts; I therefore not only gave them advice, but means to pursue it.

In one of your letters you wished that Miss Clifton might work a reformation in my principles: you now see the accomplishment of your wish, and I shall expect your congratulations. My best regards attend Mr. and Mrs. Osborne.

DAVENANT.

LETTER XXX.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

INDEED, my Lord, I most sincerely rejoice in the change of your sentiments; may the new ones hold the place they have gained, and be productive of that happiness which, without them must be ever imperfect.

I most joyfully congratulate you on
Miss

Miss Clifton's recovery, and sincerely wish that her notions may not be so rigid or refined as to clash with your schemes of future happiness: yet if I may judge of her character by your pen, I cannot flatter you. The opinion I have conceived of her sentiments, will not suffer me to suppose that she can be actuated by title, connexion, fortune, or even love itself, to pardon the injury you offered her: I wish I may be mistaken, yet I own, that I think, should she prove propitious to your suit, in the present circumstances, she must lessen herself in your esteem.

Pray have you heard from Oswald Sutton lately, for there is a report current in this neighbourhood, that he has an execution in his house. I did not believe the story, as you who are so much nearer, had not mentioned it; and I hope it is one of those ill-natured fables fabricated merely for the gratification of wanton cruelty. I join with Sir Peter Teazle, in wishing that scandal was put down by act of Parliament.

If it is true, though he never was a favourite of mine, as an old school-fellow, I will.

I will gladly render him all the service in my power.

My brother and sister are with me ; they are fitting up a house, about two miles from hence : it is small, but delightfully situated : I am glad they will be so near me ; I would have offered them mine, but some considerations prevented me ; the truth is, I mean to marry, and that soon if my stars will permit. I have the lady already in my " mind's eye." She is the daughter of Sir Clement Carlisle : her mother and mine were intimate friends, which flatters me with hopes that she is amiable : it is three years since I saw her, she was then a beautiful timid girl of fourteen, and promised to make such a woman as would be most likely to contribute to my happiness : I hate to see children join in conversation, with the effrontery of a finished coquet and yet I know not any, (this lady excepted) but what do. I am afraid I did not make so favourable an impression upon the lady : this interview happened before I went abroad, and I was a raw, conceited prig of an Oxonian : my former acquaintance with her family will
be

be easily renewed, and if I like her as well as I expect I shall, and find her free from any other attachment, I shall soon declare my passion (if you will allow it the name) and not wait till my affections are so far engaged as to be driven to despair by a refusal. This is a system quite the reverse of yours: we seek the land of matrimony by very different paths, which may find it encompassed with most happiness, I know not, but am persuaded that a little love, and a little prudence are compatible, and far better than all the former and none of the latter. Enthusiasm in the one is such an enemy to the latter, that it generally if not always destroys it. However you may disapprove of my maxims. I have a claim to your good wishes, for you are the first possessor of those of your friend,

F. FITZHENRY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

THE intelligence you received concerning poor Sutton was too true, my ignorance of the unhappy event, was occasioned by all my acquaintance here shunning me, and being equally avoided by me; I believe I am regarded as a pest; even my rank will no longer purchase a touch of a hat, or a curtsy *en passant*; and instead of resentment, I am filled with admiration of their proper indignation, which no servile meanness induces them to disguise; if the inhabitants of the world in general would follow the example of those of E——, vice must retreat to its proper regions, and virtue would flourish in splendour and security. Captain Plume has thought proper to resign the favour of the town, to court the smiles of a lord, by which means he gains the due reward of being despised by both—it was by him, however, that I was informed of Sutton's misfortune. I mounted my horse, and in about a couple of hours arrived at the Abbey, where

where I found nothing but devastation and confusion: the merciless bailiffs had seized upon every thing: I was at first informed that I could not be admitted, but upon a declaration that the purpose of my visit was to settle Mr. Sutton's affairs, and to satisfy his creditors, I was suffered to enter, and was allowed to converse with my poor friend. I find it is that devil of a woman whom he kept, that has precipitated him thus into ruin: I found him in the anguish of having just quarrelled with her, and I made use of no palliatives.—No! I was inhuman enough to apply corrosives, and loaded the fiend liberally with the epithets she deserved. Only conceive! that not one bill has ever been discharged since she has lived with him, though she has always received money for that purpose, and pretty considerable were they, for those articles in which she was concerned: they all lay before him, and the poor fellow was trembling over the difficulties which surrounded him, without the most distant hope, or even thought of extricating himself: I soon found means to rouse him from this lethargic indolence,

lence, and undertook the regulation of his affairs myself, provided he would bind himself never to renew his connexion with the wretch who had so nearly accomplished his ruin, and to consent that I should have the sole disposal of her, and that he would not attempt another interview.— This pill he knew not how to swallow, but the disease would admit of no other remedy, upon which consideration he reluctantly submitted:—Very fortunately he had been tolerably exact in his accounts: the produce of his estates is fifteen hundred pounds a-year, which at his father's death devolved to him unencumbered, and two thirds of it has for five years, passed through the hands of his mistress, and all except two hundred pounds, which was her salary, was intended for defraying the house expences; yet did the poor tradesmen make their demands in vain, and it is no more than justice to own, that they have shewn a wonderful forbearance in not sooner enforcing them by law.

When I had sufficiently calmed the agitation of my friend's mind, I prepared for an

interview of a different kind; a kind, indeed in which I was a perfect novice, for on the contrary (with perfect contrition I speak) I have been more accustomed to lead the innocent astray, than to recall the sinner to repentance: I was, however, well acquainted with the arts of such creatures. Thank my stars! though they have often been dupes to *my* artifice; I have never been a prey to *theirs*, and I will take care never more to put myself in their power: there is no defence so certain as an honourable attachment.

I found the lady reclined upon a sofa in a dishabille, which displayed a studied elegance: she was playing with a little French lap dog, and it was evident that neither her dress or attitude was the effect of chance. I had advanced several steps into the room, before she seemed sensible of my approach; at last starting! with well acted surprize, she received me with infinite grace, and displayed an elegance of manner, which excited my astonishment—notwithstanding all her allurements, my countenance relaxed not from that severity which I had purposely assumed, and
which

which Mr. Sutton's injuries had rendered the true copy of my sentiments, as to my heart it had a tenfold guard, to secure it from such witchcraft: she had a mournful tale ready to work upon my compassion; she exhausted every artifice, and all the subterfuges of the whole sisterhood, in which flattery had the principal share.—She thanked Heaven for affording her an opportunity of appealing to Lord Davenant, whose well known humanity, and generous heart, could never suffer a poor defenceless woman, to sustain an injury, from which he had the power to shield her: “and thank Heaven,” repeated she, “his power is equal to the nobleness of his soul.”

Without taking any notice of the profusion of compliments with which she loaded me, I calmly replied, “that it was
“impossible for me to prevent an injury
“of which I was ignorant; and that so
“far from regarding her as an object of
“compassion, I had always looked upon
“her as a peculiar favourite of fortune,
“and that whilst Mr. Sutton was droop-
I 2 “ing

“ing under the wreck of his estates, she
“was enjoying the spoils.”

“Ah! my lord,” cried she, letting
some crocodile tears fall down her painted
cheeks, “I see, I see too plainly, that the
“cruel Sutton, not content with the se-
“duction of my innocence, with robbing
“me of my precious fame, dearer to me
“once than life itself, is determined to
“compleat my ruin, by driving me a
“friendless outcast into the world, after
“having served him five years with the
“duty of a wife, and the servility of a
“slave; and though I am sorry to say,
“that owing to his own extravagance,
“my efforts have proved fruitless; I have
“still a heartfelt satisfaction in the reflec-
“tion, that I have used the utmost œco-
“nomy in his family expences; nay,
“even my own poor pittance has been
“sacrificed to its demands—unreluctantly
“sacrificed, as I always regarded our in-
“terests as much inseparable as if the
“priest had joined our hands: I acted
“from a principle of duty, for honesty
“obliges me to confess, that though his
“deceitful

“deceitful arts prevailed upon my youth,
“yet I own—I must own that my heart
“was never enslaved by the tender pas-
“sion, till a day of much later date.”—
The latter part of her speech was delivered, with an affected air of confusion, calculated to convey its full meaning; she then continuing, said,—“though Heaven
“is my witness it never would have had
“power to undermine my faithful con-
“fidence to Mr. Sutton.” When she ceased speaking, I addressed her thus:—
“Do not, madam, encourage an idea
“that any compliments or insinuations
“whatever can seduce my attention from
“the object of my present concern, the
“only answer I can make to what you al-
“ledge in your own behalf is, that I
“am not come hither with an intention
“to support fraud, ingratitude, or in-
“justice, and whichever party I find guilty
“of such practices, will forfeit all title
“to my services. I acknowledge, that
“what I have already seen, prejudices
“me considerably in favour of Mr. Sut-
“ton, and at this moment I am fully
“resolved to act as his friend, and I fear

“ his friend, and your enemy are synonymous terms : I will, however, proceed with all the lenity in my power, and whilst I serve him, shall guard against injuring you, unless you take arms against yourself, and oblige me to pursue measures it is my wish to avoid :—for my visit was occasioned by a firm determination to persuade or compel her to be honest.”—

“ Honest,” exclaimed she, no longer able to restrain her fury—“ I know not what you mean, or who dares impeach my honesty ; it is being too honest that subjects me to this treatment—Oh ! that I could trample the villain under my feet—that I could tear him limb from limb.”—“ Moderate your language, if you please, madam,” said I coolly, “ for depend upon it, passion will have even less effect upon me than artifice.” It would be endless to repeat the Billingsgate language of this female termagant, who soon made me an equal sharer in her abuse with the principal object of her resentment, whose house, she declared she would instantly quit, as she would rather beg for a

subsistence,

subsistence, than remain under the roof with such a villain. I, however, informed her, that I should first call upon her to answer some charges of a very serious nature, which were existing against her; and as she was determined not to purchase my services by a candid confession of her dishonesty, she deprived me of the power of exerting that humanity, to which my heart inclined, and compelled me to place her in proper custody, till the time arrived when she must make her defence before a court of justice.

This menace produced the desired effect—she was no longer in heroics; her passion subsided, her spirits forsook her, and she sunk on the sofa, where she remained some minutes in a paroxysm of thought, from which at length recovering, she said, “What would the cruel severity of your
“menaces insinuate? What can your lord-
“ship alledge against me? You will cer-
“tainly have the justice to inform me of
“what I am accused. Let me, I beseech
“you, know the utmost malice of my
“enemies.” This calm would have worked upon my credulity more than the pre-

ceding storm, had I not been possessed of proofs uncontrovertible of her duplicity, which held me steadily, and unmoved to my purpose. I assured her, there were no accusations against her unauthorized by facts; as a testimony of which I produced poor Sutton's accounts:—at the sight of which, she burst into an agony of tears, and in a moment after cast herself at my feet, with this exclamation.—“ Oh! “ my lord, there is something so invincibly dreadful in your manner, that I “ am compelled to betray myself; though “ I know the impotence of your threats; “ though I am convinced, was I to continue true to myself, I should have nothing to fear; yet am I unaccountably “ impelled to speak truth: I therefore “ throw myself upon your mercy, and “ humbly petition you not to suffer my “ weakness to add weight to my punishment.” I raised her from the ground, and gave her repeated assurances that her candour and openness, should be rewarded with every degree of lenity compatible with the welfare of my friend. She then without further deliberation confessed, that

that the money she had received, instead of being appropriated to its intended use, had been placed in the hands of a banker in London, who was once a *friend* of *her's*. I then enquired if the banker she mentioned knew that it was obtained by fraudulent means, she answered in the negative, adding, that with such a knowledge he would not have undertaken the trust.

A difficulty then occurred to me, which was to find an expedient to remove this woman out of the reach of Sutton, who I well knew would not be proof against her insidious arts, and to detain her in my power, till the money was produced, a caution which prudence and policy demanded; I at last hit upon one that wore a feasible appearance, provided she in her present penitential mood, could be prevailed upon to agree to it: I therefore thus attacked her,—“ Madam, as a test
“ of your sincerity, I shall regard your
“ compliance with the following propositions.”—“ My lord, you have only to
“ command,” answered she, “ your generosity is so well known, that I can run

“ no risque in entirely submitting myself
“ to your mercy.”

I then, after assuring her she should have no cause to repent her confidence, made her the proposal I had been meditating: which was, that she should write a letter to the banker, to pay the money to me, or my order, which she should deliver to me, and consent to retire to private lodgings, in the neighbouring town of W——, till the business was concluded, with a servant of mine to attend her, and then to quit the vicinity of Sutton Abbey.

She greatly mitigated my enmity towards her, by her frank and ready acquiescence in my schemes: she acknowledged she had no right to implore favours where she deserved condign punishment, and though by her extravagance, and a dependance upon the money she had illegally purloined, she was left destitute and almost penniless; yet she was so sensible that the nature of her offence must exclude her from the benefit of my compassion, that she thought herself highly indebted to my forbearance and lenity.

When

When I told her that it was my intention to allow her fifty pounds annually, and that I hoped my friend, when his affairs were in a better train, would double the sum, her gratitude was excessive, which after having warmly expressed, she wrote the necessary letter, packed up her cloaths, and departed with my servant as her escort, and a bank note of twenty pounds in her pocket, of which I made her a present, besides her yearly stipend.

I then returned to Sutton, freed him from the horrors of his situation, by taking his debts upon myself, and becoming his sole creditor; remained there the night and returned here this morning, hastened by the answer I expected to receive from my father,—and this moment it arrives—I see Will passing the window, I left him at the Lodge, as I never travel with more servants than I can avoid, it is lucky therefore that he is the messenger, as the two I brought with me are very unexpectedly disposed of.—I long to seize my passport—and oh, that it may prove a passport to the completion of my wishes.

It is as I say, the old gentleman is be-

sift himself with joy, and I dare say, already contemplates the features of his grandson, in whose existence all his hopes are centred without ever regarding the qualities of his mother.

I have now another difficulty to encounter, which, since all the rest are removed, seems to increase in magnitude, which is how to gain admittance to the arbiters of my fate: the more I consider the greater the improbability appears, of a culprit like myself obtaining such a grace.—Your croaking has infected me almost to despondency—vexed or pleased, I see you must croak;—it is inherent in your nature I believe—but I will endeavour to bid defiance to it.

All your plans, schemes and purposes stamp you an original but this last—this matrimonial one out masters all. I wish you may not be hoarding up a store of misery, with the poor consolation, that you endeavoured to act prudently, but most erroneously mistook the means. I will not deny that love and prudence are enemies, yet I am sensible they are both necessary to the forming in a proper manner, the in-

dissoluble tye, though not equally so, since love may create a kind of delusive happiness, even without prudence; but prudence can never compensate for a deficiency in mutual affection: time also, which is an acknowledged enemy to the latter, is almost certain to produce the former; and believe me, human nature is so full of weeds, that where the faults of two people are continually exposed to each other, Cupid's bandage is absolutely necessary to prevent perpetual discord.—We disagree alike on this and every other subject: we are rightly formed for friends, as we are always amply supplied with matter of disquisition, and neither can exult, as neither can boast of having framed an argument capable of convincing the other.

Adieu! even in despite of the extraordinary methods you make use of, to court happiness, may her smiles ever attend you.

DAVENANT.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

OUR prospects daily brighten: each succeeding morn since my last has presented us with a considerable advancement in our dear Fanny's returning health: she has sat up the last four days; yesterday she remained six hours without suffering from fatigue, and to-morrow is to quit her room for one adjoining it.

I think she is now almost as beautiful as ever; there is a languor and softness in her countenance which makes up for the absence of the roses, which so becomingly and modestly (if I may use the expression) adorned her cheeks, her bloom had more the appearance of rouge than any person's I ever saw, who I was convinced wore none; indeed she had no cause to fear the imputation, as it had one property which art cannot acquire, that of being very variable and subservient to the emotions of her mind.

Till

Till yesterday we were all apprehension and caution, afraid of a word being dropt that could recall past circumstances: the simplicity, however, of your Louisa, soon rendered this constraint unnecessary; stumbling upon that hateful letter which I wrote before her illness, and beginning to make apologies for it: I suddenly recollected to what it must naturally lead, I then, stammering and hesitating, endeavoured to change the subject; when taking my hand, “My dear,” said she, “I see
“you are afraid of drawing me into reflections on past events; but believe me
“there is no cause for such an apprehension. No! such reflections being
“constantly present to my imagination,
“have produced this happy serenity of my mind; it is from continual reflections on my providential escapes from
“the snares of villany, and from the hand of death, that has wrought my heart to
“such a degree of thankfulness, as to
“crush every murmuring thought:—they
“have likewise withdrawn a veil from my
“eyes, and represented to me a mind replete
“with deformity, in opposition to tri-
“vial,

“ vial and outward ornaments, by which
“ means they have exchanged, what I now
“ acknowledge was nothing less than a
“ most ardent affection, into contempt
“ and indifference.—After this confession,
“ can your ladyship forgive me in de-
“ ceiving you, for which I have nothing
“ to alledge in my own defence but hav-
“ ing likewise deceived myself: my fu-
“ ture conduct will however convince you,
“ that where my esteem is lost, my affec-
“ tions cannot be retained.”

She spoke with the same placid compo-
sure upon this as upon any other subject, and
her countenance witnessed the harmony of
her feelings; I greatly rejoice in the vic-
tory she has gained over a passion, the
existence of which, must have proved in-
evitably fatal to her peace.

Pray tell Miss Mostyn, that I feel my-
self highly indebted for her exertions to
entertain you, and hope you will find a
mutual advantage from them, as she gave
too much indulgence to melancholy retro-
spections for the welfare of her health: my
best love attends her. To you, dear
madam, I know not what to say, where
feelings

feelings are the strongest, expressions are commonly the weakest; then how can I say more than that I am with duty and gratitude, your affectionate

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XXXIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

A Most extraordinary event dispatches one letter almost upon the heels of another—you will scarcely give me credence when I say, that I am become an advocate for Lord Davenant—the fact, however, is neither more or less than even so, and I feel no remorse, no compunction from the part I have acted, except in having engaged my word without your concurrence, but I am sure you will not condemn me; I think you will even applaud what I have done.

This morning, coming out of Miss *Clifton's* ~~Dudley's~~ room, the servant informed me that a gentleman was below, who waited upon Miss Parker and myself, but had desired

desired him not to inform us in the presence of his mistress, this caution struck me as being very mysterious, and I enquired who the gentleman was, but the fellow was too true to his trust to give me a satisfactory answer. I soon found a pretence to call out Miss Parker, and upon entering the parlour, we saw Mrs. Forbes in earnest conversation with our visitor, who was an entire stranger to me, though not to my companion, as her countenance plainly indicated: she blushed involuntarily, and most eloquently looked her indignation, so intelligent were her eyes, that *malgré* my ignorance, I instantly in imagination applied to the person before us, the title of Lord Davenant. Repeating his words would be doing him injustice: they were the weakest evidences of his sincerity. He came to solicit Miss Parker's interest and mine with our friend. He hopes, through our mediation, to obtain an interview with the idol of his soul, and by that means to procure a pardon for the late great and flagrant offence of which he has been guilty.

No wonder that Fanny's heart fell a
victim

victim to the charms of Lord Davenant, for indeed he is such a man, "that take him all in all, I ne'er shall look upon his like again." It is happy for me that I was apprized in good time of his being *heartless*, or I might perhaps have been so too e'er this.

Miss Parker says, that grief and remorse have laid heavy taxes on his appearance: indeed he looks thin and pale. His evidently unaffected, though undisguised feelings, have almost wrought as much in his favour with her, who knew him before she knew his guilt, as upon myself whose imagination had painted a remorseless wretch, glorying in his crimes, and basely trampling on all the laws of honour and humanity; instead of which, I beheld an amiable penitent, sincerely regretting faults into which the folly of youth and the prevalence of bad company had hurried him, but which his narrow escape from a punishment the most severe, with consequent reflections, had made him contemn and abhor, and to the attonement of which, he swore his future life should be devoted.

Even

Even the cautious Parker says, that in her opinion, she acquits him of hypocrisy, as he had never strove to disguise a levity in his manner, which she had frequently said, announced the libertine: though our friend never acquiesced with her sentiments, but called her a prude, and accused her of judging uncharitably, however her former bad opinion, served to encourage her present good one; and with prayers, entreaties, and fervent supplications, he at length wrung from her a slow consent to become his advocate: her interest obtained, mine followed with alacrity—indeed I was much surprized that she withheld hers so long, but her actions are always the result of the most circum-spect caution and prudence; she possesses an excellent understanding, with a judgment greatly surpassing her years. Invoking Heaven to crown our intercessions with success, his lordship left us, and after planning a proper method of commencing our suit, we returned to Miss Clifton, with whom we again found the poor officious Marplot Mrs. Forbes, who had rendered all our precautions abortive,

by

by abruptly informing her niece of Lord Davenant's visit, and the purport of it; concluding her intelligence, with the following curious comments. "Aye aye, "I knew how it would be, well enough; "I knew you might have him yet, if you "would but have a little patience, and "I was determined to forward it all in "my power—and so says I, your lordship little thinks how dearly she loves "you, little as you deserve it—I gave "him a wipe of his tricks I warrant you. "—I'm sure, poor dear soul, says I, her "head run upon nothing else all the "time she was ill—and I said, I was sure "hearing he had been to visit you, would "do you more good than all the doctors "and 'pothecaries in the country, and "you cannot believe how delighted he "was, though he begged and prayed you "might know nothing of the matter,— "but he'd have been mortally vexed if I "had taken him at his word."

Our poor friend looked as pale as death at this strange harangue, my heart bled for her, she seemed unable to speak; but at last, in a voice scarcely articulate, she cried,

cried,—“ Oh ! dear, dear madam ! you
“ have distressed me beyond measure—
“ this is an unexpected stroke indeed—
“ Good Heavens ! could I have supposed
“ you would thus cruelly have exposed
“ my folly, and suffered a base, licentious
“ libertine to triumph in my weakness ?”

—She then burst into an agony of tears ;
which I really believe alone secured her
from a relapse ; she has not yet recovered
this unfortunate event, but is better than
we had any cause to expect—I fear it will
exclude all hopes of success in our nego-
ciation : we intend to make no effort to-
wards it, till her mind regains its former
serenity.

Lady Wilson and Mr. Beville are al-
most constant guests—indeed Miss Clifton
now admits all her friends—her ladyship
desires her compliments to you. Her
visits are seldom long ; a sick-room is not
her sphere. Mr. Beville’s are in the con-
trary extreme—he is a very agreeable
worthy man, yet I do not wonder at
Fanny’s preference, for certainly he is not a
Davenant.

We seem to be quite at cross purposes,
for

for whilst Mr. Beville hangs upon every sentence that flows from Fanny's lips, and gazes on her with impassioned rapture, without any other return than what friendship demands; Miss Parker, equally hopeless, dwells on the sound of his voice, blushes if their looks happen to encounter each other, which alas! they seldom do, and sighs deeply at his departure. She told me this evening, that she repented her promise to Lord Davenant, as she plainly perceived that Mr. Beville's attachment was not weakened by the refusal he had received, and that perhaps his persevering assiduity, the grand obstacle being now removed, might in time create a reciprocal affection, which must inevitably be productive of mutual happiness—"which happiness," said she, "I am bound by my promise to undermine, and prevent if possible."—"Ah Maria!" said I significantly—"are you not practising a little deceit upon me?—do you really wish an union to take place between our friend and Mr. Beville?"—"Indeed, indeed I do," replied she eagerly, "why do you doubt it?"—"And does
I " your

“ your heart join in this assent ?” said I.
—At this interrogation she blushed, looked down, and hesitatingly said, “ My
“ heart—why should you?—my heart—
“ indeed my heart knows not a more ar-
“ dent wish than to see them happy.”—
“ Well, my dear, and don’t you think
“ they may possibly be as happy separate
“ as united ?”—“ Why, perhaps they
“ may,” returned she, “ but consider the
“ difference between Lord Davenant and
“ Mr. Beville.”—“ Aye aye, my dear,
“ but every body may not consider the
“ difference in the same light that you
“ do ; some may perhaps cast the shade
“ the other way :” this called forth another blush. “ Come come, love, let me
“ speak peace to your conscience,” continued I, “ take my word, if Fanny’s
“ passion for Lord Davenant is extinct,
“ your sophistry will not rekindle the
“ flame, and if the meereft embers exist,
“ after what is past, she will never be
“ happy with Mr. Beville, or any other
“ man. All that we can do, therefore,
“ is to persuade her to act as her heart
“ dictates, and not to sacrifice her happiness,

“ piness, to a too rigid notion of propriety. In short, we have but to promote an interview to fulfil our engagement.”—“ I believe you are right,” said Maria, “ my scruples are entirely removed, and I shall now undertake the task cheerfully, which I should otherwise have executed with reluctance.”

What a wonderful magnanimity and worthiness of soul this girl discovers in all her actions : how unfortunate, that a heart so valuable, should be thrown away upon a man insensible of its worth.

Be so good as to send me the silk I worked last winter, I wish to make Miss Parker a present of it—its being my own performance, I flatter myself will make it acceptable.

I must conclude for the present, as it is late, if any thing occurs to-morrow before the post goes from hence, I shall inform you of it.

* * * * *

Will you not be surprized, madam, to hear that our task is already performed ? I own I am myself astonished at it, and cannot guess what will be the result. Cer-

VOL. I.

K

tainly

tainly Fanny cannot so far degrade herself, as so soon to pardon an offence against her honour. I protest, even her unexpected compliance with our request, to see Lord Davenant, has hurt me.—I really feel sensibly affected by this breach of propriety—though it was a favour I myself solicited, yet I was far from wishing it to be so easily granted.

This morning at breakfast, Fanny said, “ Oh my friends, I have a favour to beg
“ of you, which is, that you will receive
“ no more visits from Lord Davenant—
“ you must be sensible what an impropriety attends them.”—“ What will
“ you say then, my dear,” said Miss Parker, “ when I inform you, that he has
“ obtained our joint promise, to endeavour to procure for him one interview
“ even with yourself.”

“ Good Heavens !” exclaimed she, “ what unexampled insolence could give
“ rise to such a thought.”—“ Indeed,
“ my dear,” said I, “ you wrong him
“ greatly ; it was the sincerest penitence,
“ and contrition which engaged our interests in his favour : only consent to see
“ him,

“ him, and I am convinced you cannot
“ withhold your pardon and compas-
“ sion.”

“ You are much mistaken, my dear,
“ indeed,” said she; “ you may believe
“ me, when I declare, that his presence or
“ his absence, are now become equally
“ indifferent to me; but to convince you
“ further, if it is your wish that I should
“ see him, I will consent to it: I owe
“ you much more than a trifling sacrifice
“ of my opinion.” This, she said, but
alas! how vainly she flatters herself: her
heart, I am certain, is more concerned in
her compliance, than our wishes; then
how can it be proof against his graceful
figure, and insinuating address? We are
this day to inform him of the success of
our embassy, and to-morrow noon is fixed
upon for their meeting, the expectation
of which, I protest, flutters me much more
than it does Fanny: was I myself princi-
pally concerned in it, I could not be
more agitated, which is not the least won-
derful, as my affection for Miss Clifton
is adequate even to self-love. The post
now calls for my letter. I doubt not but

that in my next I shall be able to inform you of the day appointed for their nuptials.

Does not your ladyship think our separation long? I'm sure I do; yet it must be considerably lengthened. Pray be very minute in your next concerning your health and spirits. My best love attends my friend Kitty: I hope by my return she will have forgot to sigh. Oh! that I could entertain the same hope of my ever honoured parent; I could then with sincerity subscribe myself her happy, happy daughter,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XXXIV.

THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

AH! my Louisa, never before did a letter from you convey to me any other sensations than delight and happiness, as far as it related to yourself. Rejoicing in your felicity, and proud of every

every growing accomplishment, which the partial eyes of a doating mother, dead to every other enjoyment, may have greatly magnified, has been a solace to my woes, has mitigated the keenest pangs of affliction, and poured an healing balm into my grief-wounded bosom: but alas! the felicity that comforted me, the happiness which obliterated my own sorrows no longer exists. My dear child, I mean not to chide, or afflict you, but your last letter has alarmed me. You have not intentionally given me pain, but it is a danger that threatens you, and strikes at your peace, that makes me tremble: perhaps I may have created the idea, and it may have no existence but in my own imagination.

I shall enclose your letter, which I request you carefully to peruse, to examine your heart by its contents, and tell me as a friend, forgetting the difference of our years, whether the charms of Lord Davenant, which you so rapturously dwell upon, notwithstanding your knowledge of the engagement of his heart, has not endangered the freedom of your own. So soon

to forget vice, and give credit to every appearance of virtue, is the venial fault of youth: it is an error almost inseparable with innocence and inexperience, and is the result of a generous mind: but generosity, my love, could never prompt you to condemn your friend for granting your own petition: if she was wrong in yielding to your entreaties, was not you equally, if not more so, in making them? why would you endeavour to betray your friend into concessions which your own prudence disapproved? but I will not investigate this point too closely—alas! the motive is too visible. The stability of Miss Clifton's mind, I see is sufficient to secure her from being endangered by the pliability of your's: I see it, even in that consent which you so violently condemn, which in my opinion discovers more steadiness than any refusal could have done, which would only have subjected her to endless persecutions, which by her well-judged conduct she has entirely prevented. If we look attentively into the world, we must soon be convinced, that the gifts of Providence are more equally dispensed than

we

we are apt to imagine, from a cursory review. Miss Clifton's uncommon understanding and superior judgment, are blessings which she inherits, to counteract that inconsiderate vivacity, which as she associates with the world, will, I fear, too frequently precipitate her into errors and difficulties, which their guardianship will, I trust, ever enable her to overcome.

If upon reading this, you feel yourself convicted, which you certainly will, if you deserve the charge, use your most strenuous endeavours to repel the intruder: suffer not your friend's refusal of Lord Davenant to encourage a vain hope in your breast; consider the resentment his past behaviour merits, and regard his present appearance, only as a mask to conceal his newly formed purposes.

Tell me every thought of your heart without fear or reserve, and be assured of my best advice. I am willing to sink all title to authority in the name of friend, for what the latter cannot effect, I wish not to enforce by the former.

And now my dear, if after carefully

scrutinizing every sensation of your heart, you can with sincerity subscribe yourself my happy daughter, I can almost promise to bid adieu to melancholy, and sign myself your happy mother,

CAROLINE BELMONT.

You will receive your gown by the coach: give my best regards to your two friends—I long to see Miss Parker. I suppose Fanny, if her health is sufficiently established, will accompany Lady Wilson to town: don't you think it possible to prevail upon the fair Maria to visit Belmont Castle, till the time arrives when you are to join them?

LETTER XXXV.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

JOY, joy my friend! I am intoxicated with joy! Fanny grants my prayer.—Who, said she, was not more than woman?—Mere groveling mortals can resent an injury,

injury, but it is the heavenly angelic soul of my Fanny who can forgive one.

Ye hours in minutes pass : ye minutes moments
prove ;

Bless, bless my eager soul, and bring me to my
love.

Twelve to-morrow—it is an age to think of—that is the hour appointed for me to receive my most ardently wished, but un hoped pardon.—See, thou raven, how ineffectual was thy croaking. It is no dream—the dear passport to felicity is now before me—I have kissed it ten thousand times, and drawn it through my hands, that I might be sure it was not an illusion. Dost thou think that my love can suffer any diminution from her benignity ? dost thou think me such a brute as to repay her generous charity with ingratitude ? or can’st thou (an old cynical square-toes as thou art) entertain an idea less exalted of Miss Clifton from her amiable condescension. By Heavens ! if you do, you don’t deserve to live—but I cannot write—excessive joy agitates the mind more than grief. When I write again I’ll tell you how Fanny looked, what Fanny

said, and what Fanny thought—in short, not a sentence shall fall from my pen, but what is graced with the name of Fanny. Adieu then for the present,

DAVENANT.

LETTER XXXVI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

OH! my friend, that this hour was my last—was ever such a stream of joy, succeeded by such a torrent of distress—Miss Clifton has rejected my proposals. She received me with that dignity and recollection of my offence, which you thought necessary to her character; I now think so too. What she does will ever appear right in my eyes, was she to rob me of life, of fame, or fortune—What indeed can she deprive me of half so valuable as herself—and yet my punishment is just.—To be possessed of such a treasure as her heart, and to throw it wantonly from me!—Can I suffer too severely for my folly?

I wait

I wait only for my horses, to bid adieu to E——, fly to my father, and from him to the Continent.—Poor worthy man! he was not accessory to this heavy affliction—and it grieves me, that he must be a sharer in it; but to keep him ignorant of it is impracticable.

I have not the remotest hope of finding that peace abroad which I have lost at home: but it is a curse upon the sick and the unhappy always to be in the wrong place.

I am sorry to leave poor Sutton's affairs in such disorder, but as you are an idle man, I'm sure you will be happy to be employed in so charitable an act as regulating them. Charity, I am certain, is a sufficient claim to your good offices, otherwise the reflection that it may perhaps be the last obligation you can confer on me, would, I am convinced, bind you to execute it. You will remember that I am sole creditor, and will admit of no interlopers—you are to act as my agent in this affair. I should not have conferred such an office upon you, but to avoid leaving the poor fellow in the hands of a

swarm of rascally attornies, which would be giving him poison to cure his disease. What money is requisite you will receive from my banker on demand.

I will write on the other side the water, but from whence I know not, as my route is not fixed; all I know is, that whichever way it lies, it leads to misery. As long as I have sense to regret the loss of my Fanny, I shall rejoice in the possession of your friendship. Heaven bless, and keep you from the sufferings of

DAVENANT.

LETTER XXXVII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

FROM henceforth I shall cease to be surprized, whatever happens—Fanny, after all, has refused Lord Davenant.—Her conduct has certainly discovered wonderful steadiness and resolution. Steadiness bordering upon cruelty, in my opinion. I am convinced she never loved him. Could a real affection so soon be forgotten?

forgotten?—No! had she truly loved him, she would have found an hundred excuses to extenuate his guilt. I feared, by her precipitate consent to an interview, that she would forget the dignity necessary to her situation, and that resentment which, though it is inhuman to cherish for ever, ought not to be too easily resigned: little did I foresee such obstinate implacability.

Indeed, madam, you would have pitied Lord Davenant had you been a spectator of the scene, which destroyed his every hope.

Upon entering the room and beholding our Fanny's poor faded form, just recovered from the brink of the grave, and from an illness occasioned by himself—he started, changed colour, and trembled so violently, that he could scarcely support himself till he reached a seat. Fanny, I once thought seemed affected, but if she was, her endeavours to conceal her emotions were very effectual, for she acquitted herself with amazing firmness. She was obliged to speak, as she had entirely deprived his lordship of the power of articulation.

“ My

“ My lord,” said she, “ your requesting an
“ interview with me has been a subject of great
“ astonishment, but as the proposal was made
“ by two of my most esteemed friends, to
“ whom I owe unbounded obligations, and
“ as it was a matter of little consequence,
“ I thought myself engaged to grant it,
“ but must in my turn require you to be
“ as brief as possible in the communi-
“ cation of your business.” His lordship
then replied in a tremulous voice, which
proved the sincerity of his language, assur-
ing her, that he was so overwhelmed with
horror, from a retrospection of his past
conduct, that he knew not how to address
her; he exclaimed,—“ Was I monarch of
“ the universe, how joyfully would I
“ resign the world, and embrace the most
“ abject penury to be blest with your for-
“ giveness—and endowed as I am with
“ the lavish, though undeserved favours
“ of fortune, I can never enjoy them un-
“ less I can discover the means of using
“ it towards the extenuation of my offence.
“ I did entertain hopes—presumptuous
“ hopes indeed—such as I dare not utter—
“ though they were the purport of my
“ visit.

I

“ visit. Should these papers contain no-
“ thing to excite your displeasure, how
“ blest ! how supremely blest would then
“ be the writers of them ;” he then presented her a letter in which he sued for the consent of his father to offer her his hand and fortune ; and an answer from the old Earl, in which his request was cheerfully granted. I perceived satisfaction sparkle in Fanny’s eyes as she perused them—from that moment I concluded all obstacles were removed—and what you will think very strange, and what appeared greatly so to myself is, that I was instantaneously struck with a most uncommon sensation, and was so much agitated that I could scarcely keep my seat. Miss Parker enquired if I was ill, to which I replied in the negative, fearful of interrupting a conversation so critical—what seemed to me totally inexplicable was, that I felt more grieved than pleased ; but there are some minds, as the tuneful Greville says, that “ pleasure can to pain refine,” and mine is certainly of that class, for surely I could not be so capricious as to grieve at the fancied prospect of a reconciliation,
for

for which the very moment before I had most ardently wished. I have quarrelled with myself ever since—I have never ceased taxing myself with caprice and peevishness. Dear madam, assist me in developing this mystery—you know my temper better than I do myself, tell me then, my dearest mother, if you ever discovered a propensity to fretfulness in my disposition? Perhaps in fear of your attentive eye it lay concealed—for too, too sure, I have lately shewn many instances of whim and chagrin upon the most trifling causes, and to convince you that not a thought of mine shall escape you—I own—with shame and confusion, that when I found myself deceived, and they were on the point of parting for ever, though I felt a lively sorrow for Lord Davenant's visible anguish, yet it was tinged with a malicious joy. Good God! one would suppose I was under the influence of some infernal spirit which combated every good principle; for though I endeavoured to curb it with the utmost assiduity, I found it unconquerable, and that it even acquired strength by opposition. What must my two friends—
my

my two amiable friends think of me? they are strangers to such inconsistency. From you, madam, alone, I hope to find a remedy.—Spare me not, I beseech you—reign for once, if possible, your usual gentleness—where the disease is so dangerous the medicines should be powerful. I have made a long digression; it is high time to return to my subject.

Miss Clifton returning the letters, said,
“ So far from being displeased, my lord,
“ with the contents of these papers, I
“ frankly confess they afford me a genuine
“ satisfaction. The condescension of the
“ Earl your father, with his honourable
“ mention of mine, calls forth my warmest
“ gratitude.—Your letter likewise, my
“ lord, gives me pleasure, though I own,
“ I feel some repugnance to acknowledge
“ an obligation, where I have received
“ such recent insults; yet, I must confess,
“ it pleases me to find there is a talisman
“ attendant upon virtue, that can com-
“ pel the approbation even of a libertine;
“ at the same time, think not my mind
“ so sordid, or so ambitious as to be
“ purchased by wealth or titles—or that
“ I can

“ I can be bribed to bestow my hand
“ where I cannot confer my esteem ; to
“ convince you of my candour and since-
“ rity, I own” (and her face was instantly
overspread with crimson) “ that you once
“ possessed as large a share of my good
“ opinion as any one—nay, perhaps even
“ more.—I did not then suspect that your
“ principles were not equal to your rank,
“ or correspondent with the appearance
“ you assumed. I regarded your friend-
“ ship as an honourable acquisition.—You
“ have yourself undeceived me, and I
“ should now think a connexion with
“ any worthy man, even in the meanest
“ sphere, far more reputable and desir-
“ able than with your lordship.” She
then rose to depart, but his lordship con-
jured her to attend to a few words more,
after which he would offend her no longer
with his presence.

“ I mean not to fatigue you with vain
“ supplications, with a recital of the tor-
“ tures I endure ; nor dare I accuse you
“ of cruelty—no ! ’tis I, who have been
“ cruel—’tis I who have been my own
“ executioner—whilst you have been no
“ more

“ more than just. Could I expect you to
“ forget what is due to yourself in favour
“ of a wretch ? or could I hope that virtue
“ would ally itself to vice.

“ All I have now to request is, that if
“ any circumstance occurs wherein I may
“ in some degree atone for what is past,
“ even should it deprive me of life or
“ fortune, you will be so generous as to
“ acquaint me with the means, for in that
“ hope is comprized the sole value of my
“ future existence.” Fanny curtsied assent,
and he departed. Miss Parker warmly
applauded the conduct of Miss Clifton,
whilst I as freely declared my disappro-
bation. “ It is impossible,” said she, “ to
“ please such opposite sentiments ; how-
“ ever, I have the concurrence of my
“ own conscience, and that turns the scale
“ in my favour.” Soon after she com-
plained of fatigue, and retired till dinner :
yet I think I may venture to affirm, she
did not enjoy much of the refreshing balm
of sleep. I was so much affected the whole
day with the unaccountable change in my
disposition, that I was unable to write.
Fanny is now more lively than she has
been

been since her illness—her piano forte, which before this extraordinary interview was quite neglected, now affords us infinite entertainment—yet I think it is obvious that her spirits are assumed. She sometimes drops insensibly into a pensive reverie, and upon recollection, immediately starts into the opposite extreme.

* * * * *

Oh! madam, your letter is this moment arrived. The whole enigma is explained—conviction flies in my face, and I plead guilty to the charge. What infatuated blindness could keep me in ignorance of what in a single instant is become so manifest—fear not, madam! I will conquer my weakness—I will repel the intruder. I have already given too convincing proofs of my imbecillity, but by a wary unremitting caution I despair not of creating an artificial stability as effectual as if nature had formed it; and I here pledge my word, honour, and life itself, that I never will encourage an hope of gaining the affections of Lord Davenant. And I further declare, that was he to make me a tender of his hand, after
what

what has past, I would reject it—most certainly I would—though Heaven knows what a pang I at this moment endure: yet what I feel now, I am sensible is nothing to what an encouragement of such a passion would entail upon me. Do, dear madam, place confidence in me, and I doubt not but I shall soon be enabled to subscribe myself your happy daughter,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XXXVIII.

THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

YES, my dear, most joyfully will I place in you the confidence you request. I doubt not but your mind will soon regain its wonted tranquillity; endeavour not to paint difficulties, and believe me you will find none. Your passion for Lord Davenant will prove a mere transient flame, by which you have been caught through youth and inexperience, and very different from one created by
merit,

merit, and encouraged by a sympathetic return. Reflect on your friend's example, consider the victory she has gained over a passion which was mutual: strengthened by time, and ensnared by the most finished artifice. Absence will soon effect the recovery of your freedom, depend upon it. From your seclusion from the world you had seen no one likely to excite admiration, esteem or approbation—therefore is it to be wondered at, that upon one who claimed the former, you voluntarily bestowed the two latter? I blame you not, my love, it was an error inherent in the susceptibility of your disposition, but I doubt not that caution once awakened will suffice to arm you against any dangers that may arise from it.

There is a sacrifice, which, though it grieves me to propose to you, is too necessary to your future peace to be omitted. Can you resign, without pain, an enjoyment which even in expectation has been a source of such infinite delight? In a word, can you give up your intended visit to Lady Wilson, and after you have once formed the resolution, remain contentedly

tentedly at the Castle, otherwise the recipe would be vain, for harsh methods in such instances I believe, were never proved to be efficacious. I therefore only point out a proceeding which I think is most likely to assist you in a task which you have so prudently undertaken, provided after having resolved, you can act up to it with peace and serenity. You best know whether you can accede to this plan: you indeed are the best judge how far it will be necessary: all I wish from it is, to prevent you being exposed to the sight of Lord Davenant, as an accidental meeting might perhaps keep alive some remains of the passion he has inspired, and render your endeavours fruitless.

The peevishness and fretfulness you have lately remarked in your disposition, is, I am certain, already vanquished by your knowledge of its source, and I ardently wish it may have escaped observation. Even in case it did not, Miss Clifton, who is so well acquainted with your natural temper, must be convinced that it derived its existence from some cause

as

as sudden as I hope it will prove transient.

I find an inestimable treasure in the company of Miss Mostyn: no one could so nearly compensate for your absence—her understanding is excellent, and wonderfully well informed—her manner easy and pleasing. How dreadful are the effects of bad company—its fatal influence was strongly proved in having, for any period, corrupted a mind naturally so well disposed. When you return, she means to spend some time with her mother, an interview with whom she equally wishes and dreads.

Poor Multon still breathes, and I may now truly say, it is become the only testimony of his existence. Worthy soul!—his life has been free from guilt, and his death is without pain. Weighed down with years, he embraces the grave as a bed of rest, from whence he will arise to receive the bright rewards of a well spent life. Night and day he is attended by the amiable Mostyn, whose behaviour towards him, fills me with admiration and
3 gratitude.

gratitude. I should be miserable to trust him to the care of servants, and I am unequal to the fatigue of constant watching.

Adieu, my dearest child, remember that on your felicity hangs all the comfort I have left. Guard it for your own sake! and guard it likewise for hers, whose happiness depends on yours.

CAROLINE BELMONT.

LETTER XXXIX.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

CHEARFULLY, dear madam! most cheerfully will I submit to your decree: it is no more than a sacrifice I myself had meditated, and I cannot help regretting that you have robbed me of the proposal: would it not have appeared a greater effort of heroism as a voluntary offer, than as a submission to a request which duty commands me to obey?

Dear madam, your lenity has lessened all my difficulties; you have kindly taken

me by the hand, guided and supported me through the dangerous path into which my inexperience had betrayed me, and in which I fear harsher means would irreparably have entangled me. I feel there is a degree of obstinacy firmly allied to this subtle passion, and am certain that violent opposition, will ever add strength to the flame. Mine, by your prudent treatment of it, will prove transient: it already begins to appear as a dream; a mere childish attachment to the first handsome figure that presents itself. Absence, which I believe, has no effect on a firm and deep rooted affection, is infallible in such cases as the present. We have neither seen or heard any thing of Lord Davenant since my last: I dare say he quitted E—— immediately after his interview with Miss Clifton, who recovers apace; she not only takes the air in a carriage, but begins to walk out when the weather will permit, and to-morrow, for her first visit, she spends the afternoon with Lady Wilson, and in another fortnight hopes to be able to accompany her ladyship to town, who, notwithstanding her

her entreaties to the contrary, persists in waiting for her.

Miss Parker has left us, but pays frequent visits: Mr. Beville likewise often favours us with his company, but they never meet, as his visits are confined to the afternoon, for which reason (at least so I guess) we see the lady only in a morning. Fanny is greatly distressed by her frequent interviews with the former.—She sees the motive of them—it is evident that his affection for her continues undiminished by her refusal of him, and his hopes seem to be renewed by the recent event which he no doubt concludes has restored her liberty—and as friendship and esteem are the warmest sentiments with which she can ever behold Mr. Beville, his assiduity afflicts her—she may have a tincture of coquetry in her disposition, but I am certain it can never induce her to give pain to a worthy mind.

I fear the penetrating eyes of Fanny have discovered my weakness: I am convinced that some of her lively sallies have been aimed at your Louisa, so that I live in continual apprehensions.

Give my best love to Miss Mostyn, and a thousand thanks for her attention to my poor friend: his approaching dissolution affects me much, though it is an event which his best friends must wish for: he has enjoyed a large portion of peaceful happy years: at his age, death changes its aspect: instead of a ruthless tyrant striking at health, youth, fame, fortune, and every earthly enjoyment—it becomes the only friend of weak mortality: he receives it into his peaceful bosom, and rewards the well spent life, with everlasting bliss. Adieu, my ever honoured madam, perhaps e'er you receive this, my worthy friend, the instructor of my youth, will be no more.—I cannot help shedding tears at the reflection, though they are accompanied with thankfulness.

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

THE first moment I set my foot upon land I dedicate to friendship, would to Heaven I could so devote my whole heart, for it is the only ray of comfort that now beams upon my soul; all else is despair! the image of my Fanny in all climes alike, haunts my imagination; even the horrors of sea sickness, could not even for a moment chase away that more substantial evil, that heavy loss which can deprive every pleasure of its delights, and to every pain adds new anguish.

A settled melancholy possesses me; the bliss of being beloved by Miss Clifton, was not merely a sensual, but a mental enjoyment, and such an one as the mind might exult in, and every worthy sentiment be gratified. Then if so bright the prospect on one hand, how dark? how dreary on the reverse?—To know real misery in this world, it is necessary to see beauteous Fanny, to possess her invaluable

heart, and to cast it wantonly away. Oh! my friend! I am a sincere, though miserable penitent! life has no comforts left for me. Is it possible! can the bliss of being wedded to such perfection, daily to admire charms that are unequalled—hourly to listen to sentiments the most refined, embellished by accents divine; to be the chosen partner of all her joys, and to partake, to soothe, to alleviate her every grief!—Can such perpetual happiness be designed for mortal man? Alas! too sure it is, and perhaps Ned Beville is the man: and must such bliss be thrown away upon such a phlegmatic insensible? Who can gaze on her charms without rapture, whose understanding may be convinced of her worth, but his soul remains unelated with that extatic delight which is the exact reverse to the tortures I now endure; but why should I rail?—Why should I depreciate merit, unless to reduce it to my own standard?

My journey from E——— was such, as had you ever loved, you might have formed some faint idea of, but I pretend not to describe it. It was late when I reached

reached Westville Lodge, and I saw not the Earl till the next morning; my own feelings were too much disordered to support an interview—and independant of their situation, I wished not to deprive my father of his night's repose. When he was informed of the cause of my sudden appearance, he cried like a child; indeed I rejoiced in his tears, as I hoped they would partly wash away his grief.—Would to Heaven I could find the same relief.

I took care to take upon myself as much blame as effectually secured Miss Clifton from any undeserved imputation, without painting my own faults in their blackest colours.

I took leave, after having spent one day with my father, whose melancholy greatly increased my distress; the good old gentleman fancied he should never see me more—he wept bitterly at our parting. “My dear boy,” said he, sobbing over my hand, which he pressed between his own, “Heaven bless you, and may you be more fortunate in future—may you meet with a wife who can make

“ you happy :”—poor man, having been blessed in the married state himself, he thinks there is no other productive of real felicity. “ Perhaps,” said he, “ in the course “ of your travels you may meet with “ some amiable Englishwoman, who, to “ her native virtue, good sense and prudence, may unite the captivating vivacity of the French.” I warmly returned the pressure of his hand, clapped my handkerchief to my face to conceal my emotions, threw myself into my chaise, and drove off—utterly unable to reply to a description so truly applicable to my Fanny.

Such was my parting with a father, from whom I never experienced the slightest opposition or reproof. His lenity perhaps has been my greatest misfortune—to it I may attribute all my follies and my recent loss ; but I should be worse than a parricide, to condemn a weakness which sprung from kindness and parental affection.

A parting preceding the above I dare not undertake, and I am certain your humanity will spare me a recital which
would

would open every wound and make it bleed afresh.

Though my misery wants no aggravation, my ignorance of what passes in E—— encreases my anguish; I wish you lived there, or that I had some friend in the town with whom I could enter into a correspondence. There is not a soul I can apply to except that pert coxcomb Captain Plume, and with him I wish to avoid all connexion.

Adieu, I shall leave this vile place in the morning, and when I arrive at Paris I will write again. I shall enter that metropolis with very different sensations from what I did four years ago—then a votary to dissipation—now to virtue: then airy, light and gay—now heavy, dull and miserable. Once more farewell.

P. S. Direct for me at the Hotel de ———, dans la Rue de St. Germaine.

LETTER XLI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD, TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

THE time is at last fixed for Lady Wilson and Fanny's departure, and for my return. And oh! dear madam, will you suffer me to rejoice that my purposed resignation is no longer necessary. I was just going to make my excuses to Lady Wilson, when I received the intelligence that the formidable Lord Davenant had left England, condemned to exile by the cruelty of the inexorable Fanny. Without partiality, surely every one must pronounce her cruel: perpetual punishment is a severe sentence! When I told her so, she laughed; and cried "perpetual punishment! Lord child, I did not think you was such a novice as to over-rate our influence! depend upon it, if you ever hope to make one of that deceitful sex feel the force of your displeasure one fortnight, you will find
" yourself

“ yourself mistaken—ten to one he is by
“ this time upon his knees to some lively
“ Parisian, without any recollection of the
“ coarse English features of your Emma.” *Fanny*
—“ No such thing,” replied I warmly,
“ the passion you have inspired in his
“ breast will not so easily subside.”

“ I grant,” said Fanny, “ that a sincere
“ attachment founded on principle, may
“ not be easily subdued—but his lord-
“ ship’s was not of that class. Could
“ any man insult the woman he truly
“ loved, or durst he incur her displeasure
“ on whom his happiness depended?”

“ Well,” said I, (I fear with a sigh
but half suppressed) “ though I know
“ not how to vindicate him, I cannot
“ help lamenting his fate.” Miss Clif-
ton at that moment fixed her eyes upon
me with the most inquisitive earnestness
mingled with concern: I am convinced
she suspects me. It is impossible to escape
her penetration. She immediately chang-
ed the conversation; indeed, she sedulously
avoids any wherein Lord Davenant is con-
cerned; though whenever his name has
been accidentally mentioned, she has never

betrayed any agitation till yesterday, then indeed she was greatly affected; she was attacked on her weak side: my heart likewise stood a pretty severe blow, and came off victoriously. Thus it happened—taking our usual morning's ride, and led on by the beauty of the country, further than prudence might have carried us, as the weather wore an aspect of uncertainty, we were caught in a violent storm of hail and rain. Our party consisted of Fanny, Miss Beville, her brother and myself; we were obliged to dismount, and rejoiced at the sight of a small cottage, whose neat and comfortable appearance might even court luxury to seek that content under its roof, which affluence cannot purchase, nor magnificence confer.

We were received by the humble inhabitants, with an hospitality that would have done credit to the esquire; but in the breast of our host, who had no resource but industry, and where the liberality of to-day must encrease the labour of to-morrow, it was a credit to humanity. His wife, (who, at our entrance, held a child

child in her arms, which she put into its cradle, where it lay chuckling and smiling like a cherubim) reached each of us a good oak chair, which she carefully wiped, though they were as bright as a mirror. She then set before us a neat rural repast, saying,—“ If your honours
“ would bite a bit of our homely food
“ yo’d make me meety poud ; to be
“ sure it is na what’s fit to set afore such
“ gentlefolk ; but such as it is you bin
“ welcome to’t as flowers i’May.” Our ride had so sharpened our appetites, that we willingly yielded to the good woman’s invitation, and the most luxurious entertainment could not have afforded me a more agreeable meal. Whilst we were thus employed, a lovely little girl about four years old, who sat on Miss Clifton’s knee, and who had chiefly engrossed her attention with her innocent prattle—cried, “ look, look, mammy,” holding up half a guinea, “ see what this pretty
“ lady has given me, it’s just such a thing
“ as that fine gentleman that was here a
“ great while ago gave Billy, and Jacky,
“ and all of us.” The good woman then
made

made so many curtsies, and so many thanks, and was so sorry and so much ashamed, that poor Fanny was quite overpowered with her gratitude: she had taken all possible care to keep her little donation private, but the child's rapture rendered her endeavours ineffectual. The pretty little teaser looking up at her new friend, said, " lady, do you know that
" fine gentleman that was so good to us,
" and that mammy makes me pray for
" when I say my prayers?"—" No my
" love, I don't: but every body must
" surely be good to such beauteous in-
" nocence."—" Why," returned the sweet pratler, " he has buttons on his
" coat just the same as this," taking hold of one upon her habit. Fanny changed colour, kissed the child, and set her down, drew her handkerchief from her pocket, and instantly replaced it, attempted to rise from her seat, and sat down again.

I was sensible of the cause of this evident discomposure, as upon remarking the uncommon beauty of her buttons, she had informed me that Lord Dave-

nant

nant had procured them for her, and that they were the same to some that he wore. The restless dame curiosity, however, would not suffer me to trust alone to conjecture, and prompted me to enquire of our hostess who the child meant. My interrogation threw the poor soul into ecstasies, "Oh! madam," exclaimed she, "we are bound to pray for that gentleman while we have breath to draw: he saved our goods from being seized, ourselves from being turned out of doors, and our children from starving. Heaven shower down all thy blessings on his head;"—this ejaculation was accompanied by uplifted hands and eyes streaming with tears of gratitude—"Oh! madam, we were sore distressed," continued she, "when Providence sent him to our assistance; yo' little think to what hard straits we poor folks are often put; —two of our kye died of a distemper that raged in the neighbourhood; the lightening set fire to our stack of corn, and burnt it to the ground, and indeed every thing seemed last year to go cross, as if it was for the purpose, and with all
" our

“ our labour, we could na scrape together
“ our bit o’ rent, and our landlord, who
“ is a hard, thrifty man, would na let
“ it lie a day after it was due, but sent
“ bailies into the house to sell up all we
“ were worth. Whilst we were in this
“ terrible plight, this blessed gentleman
“ rode by, and hearing our distress, came
“ himself to enquire the cause of it: his
“ generous heart bled for us; he soon put
“ the ravenous bailies to flight, and paid
“ our landlord, not only what we owed
“ him, but half a year’s rent beforehand.
“ He gave my four children a guinea
“ a-piece—entered our two lads to the
“ school in the next village, and pro-
“ mised us that Squire Giles, that lives
“ in the great house you saw upon the
“ right hand, should pay their master,
“ and give us ten pounds every year;
“ and what was best of all, he gave us
“ money to buy two cows i’ the room
“ o’ them that died. I’m sure if I was to
“ talk for the days of ever, I could na
“ tell yo’ half his goodness.” During
this relation, Miss Clifton, unable to sup-
press her emotions, gave full scope to
what

what I can no other way describe than by terming it a luxury of tears, which in order to enjoy unobserved, she leaned through a window, and covered her face with her handkerchief. "Then you are unacquainted with the name of your benefactor," said I.—"Why, I cannot say I can partly remember it," replied the good woman, "but his servant called him a lord, and said he had bin some time in E——, but somehow I cannot think he was a lord, for he was as affable and free as if he had bin one of our own country folk."

My curiosity being now fully satisfied, I dropt the subject, and no one else seemed inclined to revive it: Miss Clifton, from reasons which are too obvious to need an explanation, Mr. Beville, from a cause little less so, and his sister from pique; that lady's vanity having once flattered her that she possessed the heart of Lord Davenant, and by some late occurrences, she was convinced of her error, and stung with disappointment.

The weather now proving favourable, after having returned a small gratuity for
our

our kind and liberal entertainment, we mounted our horses, and quitted this abode of rustic happiness. During our return, Fanny was silent and thoughtful; Mr. Beville spoke seldom, but sighed frequently, and the burden of the conversation fell upon his sister and myself, but was too trivial to repeat, as indeed all must be wherein that lady has a part; she is just the character Miss Clifton once described to me, though the vacuity of her mind is far beyond any idea I could ever form of it from thence.

Fanny continued pensive the remainder of the day; she had a long *tête-à-tête* with Miss Parker, but with me the cottage adventure was never mentioned, which I do not consider as a diminution of friendship, but as a proof of her attention to my happiness: it is evident she imagines my heart is even less at ease than her own; therefore carefully avoids adding pain to the wound it already endures. Continual and unremitting acts of kindness and friendship, leave me no room to form any other conjecture: on this subject alone she treats me with reserve;

serve; a reserve which answers her intentions, as I am conscious it has greatly contributed to my present peace. To Maria she is communicative concerning Lord Davenant, and to me she unfolds her every thought of the worthy Beville, whose perseverance greatly distresses her.

This day week I may hope for the happiness of seeing you, as on Wednesday next I shall leave E——, if you will be so kind as to send for me; in two three days after which our friends intend to depart for London.

I have just received your letter, which informs me of the death of poor Multon, and I cannot help apprehending (from the visible agitation in which it is written) that this event, notwithstanding it has been for some time a subject of your prayers, now it is arrived, greatly affects your spirits—I wish I may be mistaken.

Adieu, my much honoured mother; on Thursday next, no unforeseen accident intervening, I shall have the happiness of being enfolded in your maternal arms,
than

than which not a more supreme felicity
can be enjoyed by your dutiful

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XLII.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

YOUR letter arrived when I was deeply engaged in the business you had consigned me, and I am happy to say, that I have so well executed the commission as to have brought poor Sutton's affairs into a tolerable train; his lady (Miss Drury I think she calls herself) fulfilled her engagements, and to our great astonishment, the money refunded by her, together with a loan from you, of two thousand three hundred pounds, sufficed for the entire discharge of his debts and the purchase of a cornetcy, so that the mind of our friend, which was lately reduced to the brink of despondency, is now elevated to the hope of returning crowned with laurels, and in full possession of his former affluence.

I am

I am truly sorry for your disappointment, but it is no more than I expected; it is a very comfortless reflection, but to be sure your loss encreases the value of the treasure you deplore: had Miss Clifton accepted your offer, she would have lost great weight in my estimation, and no doubt in yours likewise, when time had worn down your romantic passion to the bounds of reason; do not fly out, when I say that I agree with the Earl of Westville, and think it even more than possible, that there may be many pretty faces in the world, capable of obliterating the all-powerful charms of Miss Clifton—no offence to the lady; you know I have never seen her, and am no Oroondates: your three last letters concerned, but surprized me not; the cause and effect were equally expected by me: that the lady would act as she has done, your letters had prepared me for, and I must be totally unacquainted with your temper, not to foresee the present consequences.

As I passed through E——— I waited upon your rival Ned Beville; renewed a friendship that has been long interrupted,
and

and engaged him in a correspondence for the future. I attempted to extenuate your crime towards the idol he worships, by describing your present penitence, but he would hear nothing on that subject: I am informed from all quarters, that an union between Miss Clifton and him, is regarded as an event certain to take place; your conjectures therefore, were not without foundation: this, I fear, will increase your wound for the present, but as the blow is inevitable, keeping you in ignorance of its approach would only be augmenting its weight.

I cannot suppose that your fiery spirits will be long confined to one point: I don't expect the flame to cool, but I'll lay ten to one, that in a post or two, it will have changed its object.

In the course of a fortnight or three weeks, I intend to visit London, where I shall for the first time put on Cupid's livery; previous to my appearance I think it will be necessary to write to Sir Clement for his consent in form, which I have no doubt of obtaining. With so large a family, it is natural to suppose

his daughter's portion cannot be very considerable, and three thousand pounds *per annum* is an object not to be rejected.

Farewell, and God speed you weel to the place of your destination; I fear not but Paris has charms, powerful enough to chase away all the blue devils that encompass you: it is the most sovereign antidote to melancholy the world affords.

You must resume some traces of your former self, or *Madame la Marquise; la belle Brunette; la petite Avigne*, and half a score more of your old flirts will recognize *leur belle Anglois*.

Adieu. Remember me *à tous nous amis*, and believe, although you rank me among the insensibles, that I sincerely and most feelingly commiserate your sufferings, and that you can never be afflicted with any grief that will not be sensibly deplored by your

F. FITZHENRY.

LETTER

LETTER XLIII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

FANNY will scarcely spare me one moment to inform your ladyship that to-morrow I quit E——, and hope to reach the castle early on Thursday evening. The coach arrived here yesterday, therefore the horses (whose ease I know you always consider) will have a day's rest.

I have had so many adieus to make, and so much civility to return, that I have not had a single moment at command, the last three days.

Dear madam, what shall I think of London, when I find this place too gay for me? which is absolutely the case—at least would have been, had we entered into all the engagements and *petite* parties which we must have done, had Fanny's health permitted; the little wild chit herself, has been with difficulty restrained,

nor

nor would she, I believe at any rate, had not her wife physician hinted, that on her present caution depended her journey to town.

She has an admirable temper, trifles never discompose her, she seldom finds an hour hang heavy on her hands, and I verily believe, that in a desert she would be happy, notwithstanding her love of society; in all instances, she seems regardless of herself, but for her friends her feelings are constantly awake: she has an enlarged and liberal mind, which constantly displays itself in the most charitable actions; yet she is an œconomist, and regulates her expences with the utmost exactness; her character is not to be developed in an hour, for with a temper perfectly even, she has a charming variety in her manner, which renders her company always new and pleasing.

Mr. Beville has a second time made proposals, which were again rejected. He received his sentence with a deep, though silent concern; and withdrew visibly agitated. Poor man! I fear his affections will not be easily removed, they seem to

be steadily and immutably fixed upon their present object.

Fanny desires to be remembered to you, in the most respectful terms; was you to see her now, you would not know the little playful girl with flowing ringlets, that accompanied me from Queens-square: she has now added to her native artlessness and good humour, an elegance unequalled, and untinctured with that poison so destructive of every charm, affectation.

You will not receive this scroll many hours before the writer of it, who, thank Heaven, can now with sincerity in every respect (as well as in the prospect of so soon embracing her revered mother) subscribe herself your *happy* daughter,

L. STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

FANNY CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

GROSVENOR-SQUARE, JAN. 12.

HERE I am;—self and cargo just arrived.—There is certainly something mighty exhilarating to the spirits in the noise and bustle of this place. I absolutely believe there is an intoxicating quality in the rattle of the coaches; therefore you must not expect any connexion in this epistle.

After all, I am really frightened to think what scrapes such a mad cap as myself may run into, turned loose in this great city. If I had an old cross guardy, who would put a chain on my foot, and never suffer me to stray beyond the extent of it; or if I could meet with an Albany in my walks, I might dwell here in safety; but my misfortune is, that all my friends have a better opinion of me than I deserve, and whenever I ask their advice, cry, “follow your own discretion.” I

M 2

have

have frequently heard it said, that the surest method of making a woman miserable, is to let her have her own way, and in good faith, I believe it is; for from having no guide or monitor, I am always committing errors, and repenting when it is too late; I am almost tempted to wish with Belcour, that I could find somebody who has a worse opinion of me than I have of myself; though I don't know, whether I should be willing to adopt their sentiments in preference to my own, for self-love I fear, is a very predominant principle in the breasts of us all.

Lady Wilson is already surrounded by milliners, mantua-makers, haberdashers, &c.—She has just sent me a summons to join the assembly:—my little concerns in the article of dress will soon be arranged, for though I would not willingly disgrace her ladyship, I am determined to suit my wardrobe to my finances, in despite even of that almost irresistible * deity, fashion.

* No wonder if I gods create,
As all good bards have done of late."

BATH GUIDE.

E——

E—— will be in a blaze—the town will talk, and the busy Madam Rumour will again display her eloquence, at the expence of your poor friend. Fine doings indeed!—Times are finely changed since her young days. She, instead of gadding to public places, sat sedately at home sewing plain work, or making of tapestry.—Now, forsooth, a young chit is no sooner out of her leading-strings, but she must fly up to London, and run into all sorts of new-fancy led extravagance, till she has spent her fortune, and made herself a beggar.—And all this for a husband, I suppose—Well, well, I say nothing:—I wish it may answer, that's all—but men are not such fools as to be caught by tinsel. Many have been the harangues of this kind with which the departure of your little insignificant friend has entertained the good city of E——.

I am called again to consult upon my future appearance in this region of—Lord! I was going to say, of folly—Well, folly let it be, for I believe it will suit me as well under that title as any other.

M 3

I must,

I must, though most reluctantly, quit you for gauze and frippery.

Will the Countess accept of your Fanny's most respectful duty? we are sisters you know, and will her ladyship think me too presuming, if I say that a filial affection for the mother of her sister exists in the breast of your

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER XLV.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

THREE days have I been in London; during which time, I have been so busy, that I have scarcely had time to turn my head to the right or to the left—Indeed, I meant not to write till I had something to relate.

We are in a most delightful bustle—I can't say I dislike it at present, though I believe novelty is its principal charm. It answers one good purpose, however; it leaves me no time to meditate on the cottage scene—and yet—there is something

thing so painfully pleasing in that cottage scene, that I would not totally forget it for all the balls in the universe.

Tell me truly, Maria, may not I rejoice that Lord Davenant is not utterly void of every good principle, without running any risque of reviving a passion, which pride, prudence, and female delicacy unitedly forbid? give me your opinion candidly, and freely; unfold likewise the state of your own feelings—nobody is more deserving of your confidence, if a sincere friendship can render me so, than I am:—besides, perhaps I may discover a secret, by informing you that you have very little more to disclose than what I am already acquainted with; I guess the cause of your reserve hitherto:—that cause is however removed, and nothing now remains to oppose a mutual deposit of our most secret thoughts in the bosom of friendship. In you alone, can I repose an unrestrained confidence, whilst the situation of Lady Louisa Stafford's own heart, renders her a very unfit confidant of the sensations of mine: for alas! I greatly fear some sparks remain of a passion, I

blush to acknowledge, but which I have too much reason to apprehend will embitter all my future moments of reflection.

Whilst I regarded Lord Davenant as entirely worthless, and void of every good principle, my heart was free as air from any impression in his favour; his appearance, with all his insinuating accomplishments, affected me not; I withstood them, unmoved, and unhurt; but the cottage scene! has implanted a wound in my heart, which I fear the power even of time will prove insufficient to erase.—Well! it may injure my peace, but it shall never weaken my resolution—he is still the enemy of my sex, and as such merits my abhorrence:—but this is a subject which of all others I ought to avoid, therefore I will change it for one less interesting.

We arrived on Saturday about noon; the remainder of the day was spent in consultations upon the important article of dress. The next morning, being Sunday, I ignorantly supposed, we were to attend the toll of the bell, say our prayers, and
hear

hear a sermon, as we vulgarly do in E——. I rose therefore about eight, and hurried on my cloaths—indeed, I was under a necessity of being as expeditious as possible, for the morning was intensely cold, and there was no fire in my room, nor could I procure any, though I spared not the bell cord. When my dress was completed, I sallied forth in quest of a warmer climate:—the only person I met, was a woman cleaning the hall and stairs, and who, I believe was the only one awake in the house, except the country damsel and her maid. When I entered the breakfast parlour, I found it as cold and comfortless to my benumbed fingers, as the apartment I had quitted. I returned to my friend upon the stairs, and desired her to conduct me to a room with a fire in it.

“A fire, madam!” said she with surprise in her countenance, “there i’nt no fire yet in no room in the house, only in the kitchen, and that there, I’m afeard i’nt not yet quite burnt up.”—“Then I will be much obliged to you,” said I, “if you will make a little fire in the breakfast parlour.”—“To be sure

“ me’m, I’ll make one in a minute—
 “ I’m sure I’m sadly ashamed that your
 “ la’yship should wait for one, but in-
 “ deed I never thought as how quality
 “ ever got up afore noon, I did but come
 “ here the other day; at Sir Clement
 “ Carlisle’s, where I lived last, I never
 “ made the fires till eleven o’clock, and
 “ then they had warmed the rooms afore
 “ breakfast time, and I thought as I heard
 “ nothing to the contrary, that I must go
 “ on here in the same manner, but I shall
 “ know better another time.” She then
 flew for her coal-box, and soon gratified
 me with a sight of a good fire—but
 Morpheus envies you of this entertain-
 ment, and will not suffer me to proceed at
 present.

* * * * *

Where was I—Oh! I was just roasting
 myself by a good fire, which I hold to be as
 great a luxury on a frosty morning as can be
 enjoyed: my patience however, was almost
 exhausted when the clock struck ten, and
 eleven, without the appearance of Lady
 Wilson: at length, I was accosted by Mrs.
 Brown, her Ladyship’s woman, with—
 “ Lard

“ Lard Miss, my lady is vastly concerned
“ that you have been up so long, and
“ has sent me to desire you will walk up
“ stairs, and take your chocolate in her
“ room.”—“ Your lady is not ill, I hope,
“ Mrs. Brown?”—“ Oh dear, no me’m,
“ but in town *we* keep very different
“ hours, from what *we* do in the country :
“ my lady never breakfasts before twelve ;
“ which is thought very early here.” I
then walked up stairs, and upon my appearance, her ladyship, who was still in bed, exclaimed—“ Why you little rustic !
“ how could you think of rising at eight
“ o’clock in London?”—“ Your ladyship must pardon my first offence,” said I, laughing, “ and I doubt not but I shall
“ be perfectly well-bred in time, with
“ your ladyship’s example and instructions.”—“ Bless me child, what do
“ you mean to do with your hat and
“ cloak, at this time of day ?” the one was on my head, the other hung upon my arm. “ Your ladyship will expire with
“ laughing, I fear, when I inform you
“ that I was ignorant enough to think of
“ going to church this morning.”—“ Oh

“ poor thing! I fear you will be obliged
“ to hoard up all your piety till you re-
“ turn to E—— : you will find little
“ time for devotion in London, I pro-
“ mise you.”

I could not help looking grave upon this declaration, for notwithstanding few are more attached to innocent gaiety, than I am, yet I think it unpardonable, when it interferes with the duties of religion.

During our *dejeuner*, cards poured in of all denominations,—cards of enquiry, cards of invitation, &c. &c.

I expressed my astonishment, that so many should already be acquainted with her ladyship's arrival. “ Oh my dear,” replied she, “ I take care to apprize all
“ my friends of it in good time; to re-
“ main a week in town without company,
“ and without engagements, is the horrid-
“ est thing in nature.”

By the time her ladyship was up, and attired in an elegant morning dress, which was not before two, the cards were succeeded by a multitude of visitors, and I was amazed to hear the same names announced,

nounced, which two hours before appeared upon the tickets.

The conversation which passed, I cannot pretend to repeat, nor if I could, would you take the trouble of reading it. Every one was made up of affectation, yet I observed that our sex was greatly eclipsed in this fashionable art (if I may so term it) by the other.

I was addressed by two or three of these *petit maitres*, with such ridiculous shrugs and grimaces, that I with difficulty suppressed a risibility which their appearance, so new to me, powerfully excited.

A Mrs. Warbleton, to my utter surprize and dismay, pressed her ladyship to attend a concert at her house that evening, saying she had secured the most capital performers. Luckily, as I thought, I had obtained a promise from her ladyship to accompany me to the Magdalen Chapel; notwithstanding the vulgarity of the place, her word being given, she thought herself under a necessity of referring to me for a decision, and not to shock her ladyship by mentioning the Magdalen, I pleaded the
I state

state of my wardrobe, which would not enable me to appear in a polite circle, till it had undergone considerable alterations. I own this excuse, (though I was obliged to make it, being unwilling to incur their ridicule, by discovering my real motives) seemed to me very frivolous, but it luckily proved unanswerable, and the good lady, rather than risque the disgrace of an ill dressed person, at her assembly, suffered me quietly to follow my own inclinations, and I hope I shall for the future escape all such invitations; for if I must not devote the day to its proper duties, I am determined not to spend it in idle amusements.

My expectations were more than realized, by the performance of the service at the Magdalen. The singing charmed me, and reflections upon the merciful charity that displayed itself in the institution, gave me a sincere delight.

Monday morning, or more properly the time from one till three o'clock, was employed in shopping, and sitting at an auction: at which I was highly entertained,

ed, and thought, had I money to squander, that there were many toys I should have been tempted to purchase.

There were many people of distinguished rank, and many beautiful women, with the assistance of rouge: but the celebrated Perdita seems still to support the pre-eminence.

At three we drove home, dressed, and were joined by a Lady Finchley, her daughter (who is unfortunately plain) and a pretty Mrs. Crofts, a young widow, who I find is esteemed amongst the first rate beauties: they took an *early* dinner with us, (at half past four o'clock) and accompanied us to the theatre, where I had the pleasure of seeing the deservedly admired Mrs. Siddons exhibit in the character of Isabella: most highly do I applaud her inimitable performance: but I hope I shall never again be so much affected by imaginary woe.

In the midst of one of the most distressing scenes, when my eyes were swimming in tears and every thought was engaged by the performance, Lady Wilson pulling my sleeve, begged leave to introduce

duce me to Lord Fitzroy, a particular friend of her's; upon which a fribblish figure, with a cringe, said something about honour, or happiness—or—in short, I know not what, (for I find it is polite in the men to whisper, whilst it is good breeding in a lady to talk aloud, and interrupt the players.) When my new acquaintance had finished his address, and my head was rather averted, he drew out an opera glass, and surveyed me with the most mortifying assurance. I wonder what he thought of me, to authorize such impertinence; though Lady Wilson did not regard it in the same light, but said, that it was owing to my own ignorance of life that I was offended at it; besides, said she, “ my love, you must excuse me, “ but 'pon my honour nothing could “ excite astonishment more than your “ situation: what could be more *outrée*, or “ ill-bred than crying in public, it must “ undoubtedly appear perfectly *nouvelle* to “ his lordship, who is the very essence of “ the ton.”—“ Really your ladyship “ amazes me—I find it requires more “ study and application to acquire a “ proper

“ proper degree of *politesse* than I was aware
“ of, and upon my word, I think the
“ purchase too high, if it can be reduced
“ to nothing less than the annihilation of
“ the feelings.”

Last night we were at a ball given by Sir Clement Carlisle, who I find eclipses the whole *beau monde* in elegance, and of course is much courted, much envied, and much abused. His wife, if it is just to form so hasty an opinion, is one of those good sort of easy insignificants, who conform to the ideas, customs, and rules of the world, for no other reason, than having no ideas to form rules for themselves: one that partakes of every amusement without enjoying any.

Her daughter, who is the eldest of her offspring, and the only one who has yet appeared in public, inherits her mother's simplicity, and her father's rage for magnificence and shew; yet is she too polite to acknowledge her approbation of any thing: every thing is petrifying; every thing is a bore; every thing is insipid, and encreases her *ennui*. In speaking of her personal charms, one cannot call her plain,
yet

yet all that can be said in favour of her beauty, is, that she paints well. You will think me horribly ill natured, but she is really such a little heap of affectation, that I have no patience with her. I happened to stand by her in the dance, and she treated me with so much insolence, notwithstanding she was in her father's house, that I think I am amply justified in drawing the outlines of her character without flattery. I find a great nonchalance in the behaviour of many, and I have a shrewd suspicion that I am regarded as an humble dependant upon the bounty of Lady Wilson: not that that lady's behaviour towards me, can authorize such a supposition, for she has always treated me with the kindest attention and civility. She is an amiable woman, and possesses a good understanding; her only foible is being too much biggotted to high life.

I danced with an officer who had half won my heart at the playhouse, being the only person who sympathized in the distresses of Isabella; he proved as I expected, to be a sensible, agreeable; man his name is Droitville, he appeared to be
about

about thirty years of age : indeed I was very much pleased with my partner, though Mrs. Crofts was so obliging as to lament that I was thrown away (as she expressed herself) upon a man of no esteem in the fashionable world : she danced with Lord Fitzroy, by which her vanity seemed much gratified. The beginning of the evening his lordship did not seem to recollect that he had ever before beheld me, but towards the latter end of it, his memory was restored, and his behaviour became obsequiously polite ; for this flattering distinction I fancy I am indebted to the pretty widow : not for this good office believe me, but for a *je ne sai quoi* about Mrs. Crofts. I like her better than any of my town acquaintance.

Adieu ! her ladyship summons me to breakfast. Believe me most sincerely and affectionately your

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS FANNY CLIFTON.

OH! my Fanny, how delighted am I! on Monday se'ennight, instead of Monday three weeks, your Louisa will make her appearance in Grosvenor-square. Miss Mostyn's mother has determined to visit her daughter at the Castle, dreading the insults she might be subject to in her native place; my mother therefore, not being deprived of her companion, embraces this, as she does every opportunity of promoting my felicity. A note to Lady Wilson, signifying my intention, accompanies this. I think you will be surprized at this sudden alteration of my plan. I have reason, however, to think, from her ladyship's constant, and friendly civility, that I shall meet with a kind reception:—but from my Fanny I expect even more. Will she not fly into the arms of her friend with undissembled joy—Yes! it is we alone who experience the delights of a sincere friendship—with the lords of the creation

creation, it exists only while their wine holds good—but with the women it is a failure in the heart alone, that can destroy the union.

The youngest son of Doctor Wallace succeeds poor Multon, in the office of chaplain to our family—he is a worthy young man: has an excellent understanding, well improved, and his appearance and manner speak the gentleman.

You must excuse the shortness of this epistle, for I write in haste, a circumstance unusual with me; my time is seldom limited, but the carriage wait. We dine from home, an indulgence which does not happen above three times in a winter, nor would my mother make any engagements, but in compliance with my entreaties.

I complain of want of time, yet complain of scribbling—you are a bewitching gipsy—I dare say the men complain of your fascinating properties as much as your ever devoted friend

LOUISA STAFFORD.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.